Queen's Quality

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Story & Art by Kyousuke Motomi

Shojo Beat

Queen's Quality

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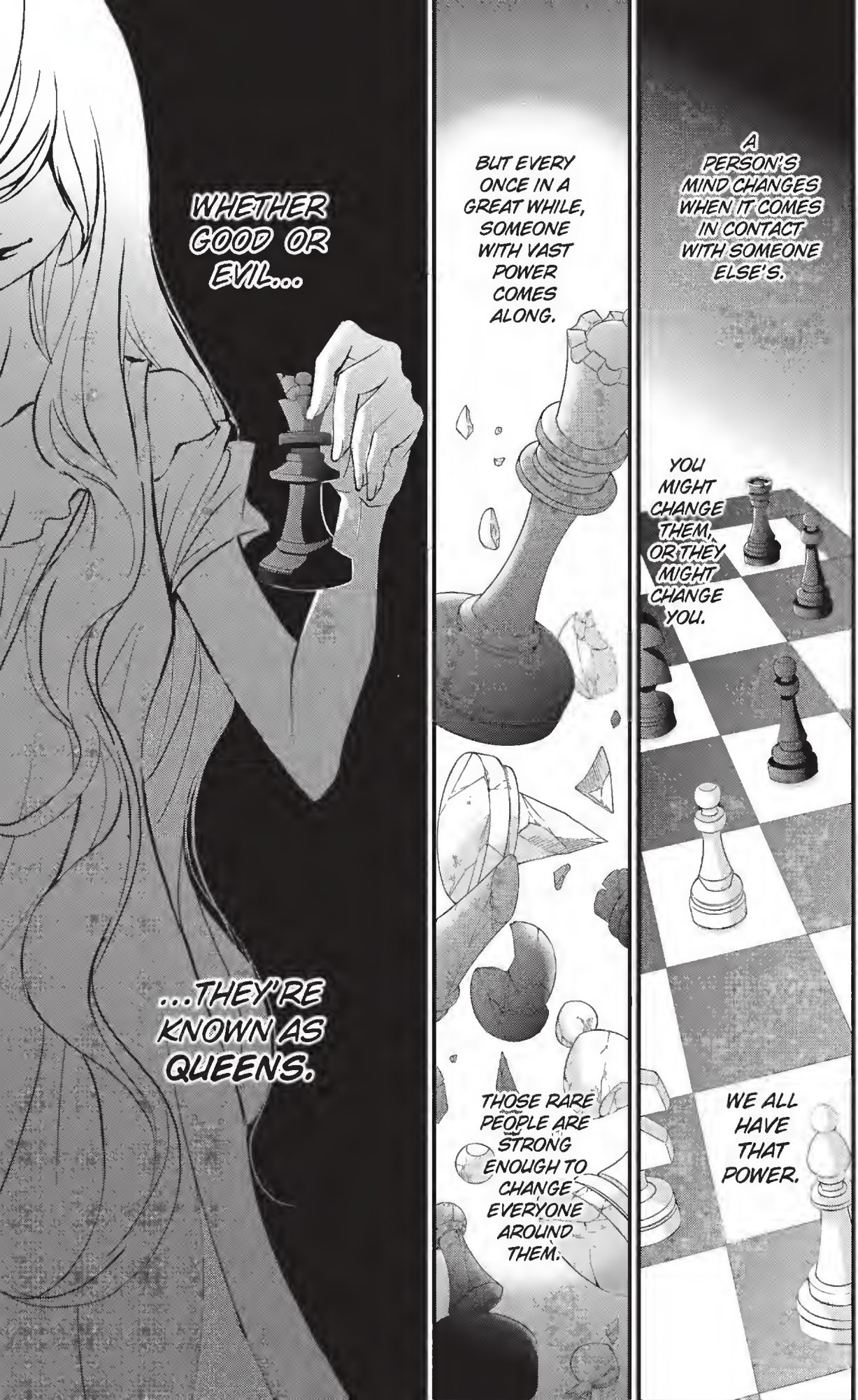
AND NOW SHE'S GROWING FROM A PRINCESS ...
I'VE LOVED HER FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.
SHE'S ALWAYS MEANT SO MUCH TO ME.
...INTO A QUEEN.

Queen's Quality
Chapter
1

Hi, everyone!
This is Kyousuke Motomi.
Thank you for picking up
volume 1 of *Queen's Quality*.

The story has a new title now, but it's actually a continuation of the three-volume series *QQ Sweeper*. I hope you'll enjoy it just as much under its new name! And if you're a reader who isn't familiar with *QQ Sweeper*, I hope you'll still enjoy *Queen's Quality*!

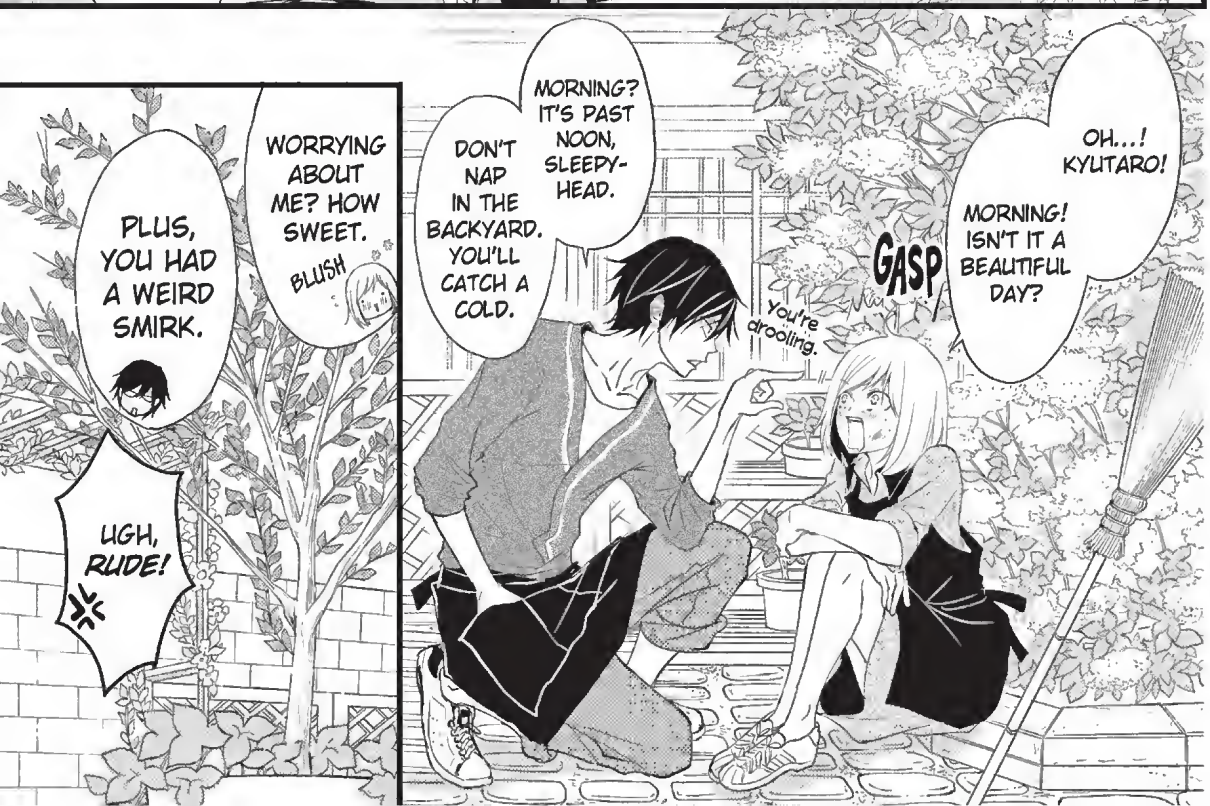
Queen's Quality is a story of love and grime—a tale of mental cleansing! It's a love story that occasionally includes bloodshed and bug squishing.


A PERSON'S MIND CHANGES WHEN IT COMES IN CONTACT WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S.
YOU MIGHT CHANGE THEM, OR THEY MIGHT CHANGE YOU.
WE ALL HAVE THAT POWER.
BUT EVERY ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE, SOMEONE WITH VAST POWER COMES ALONG.
THOSE RARE PEOPLE ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO CHANGE EVERYONE AROUND THEM.
WHETHER GOOD OR EVIL...
...THEY'RE KNOWN AS QUEENS.

"YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL—
"YOU'RE LIKE A PRINCESS.
"HEY, YOU KNOW WHAT?
"I REALLY, REALLY LIKE YOU. A LOT."
NISHIOKA!

HEY, NISHIOKA.

SCRITCH
SCRITCH
HMM...?
COME ON, GET UP.

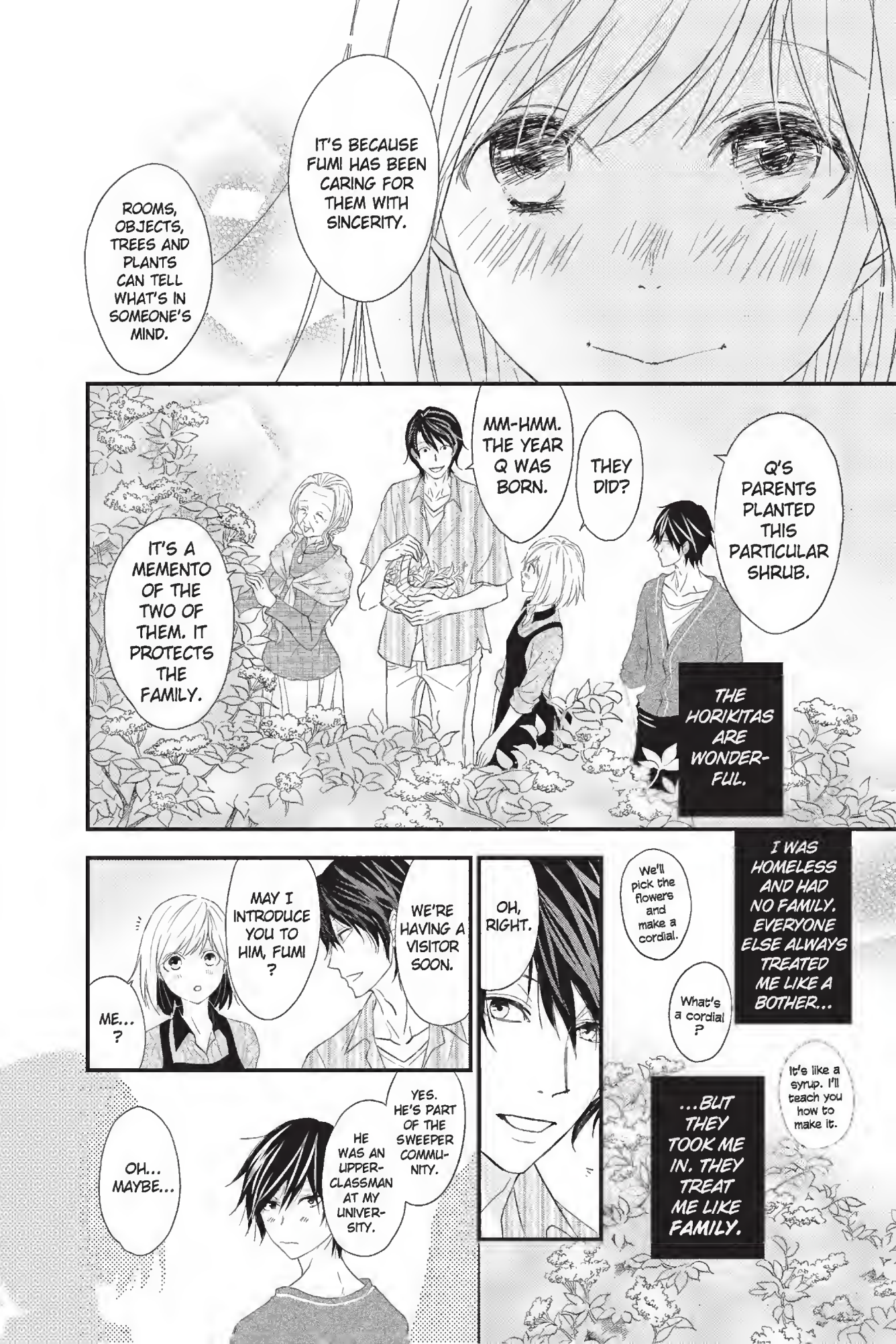

OH...! KYUTARO!
MORNING! ISN'T IT A BEAUTIFUL DAY?
GASP
You're drooling.
MORNING? IT'S PAST NOON, SLEEPY-HEAD.
DON'T NAP IN THE BACKYARD. YOU'LL CATCH A COLD.
WORRYING ABOUT ME? HOW SWEET.
BLUSH
PLUS, YOU HAD A WEIRD SMIRK.
UGH, RUDE!

SOME-ONE WAS ... KISS-ING ME.
YOU RUINED MY WONDERFUL DREAM!
You have no filter at all.
HA-RMPH!
HOUSE-KEEPERS DON'T GET TO DOZE OFF.
WHAT KIND OF DREAM WAS IT?
I WAS ENJOYING THE DREAM SO MUCH, AND IT FELT SO REAL...
BUT I WONDER WHY I DREAMED THAT?
I'VE NEVER EVEN BEEN KISSED.
IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN KISSED, HOW CAN YOU SAY IT FELT REAL?
DUMMY.
Sigh...
What's wrong with dreaming about a kiss?
SHOCK
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE!
HAVE YOU EVER KISSED ANY-ONE?

I—
YEAH.
HUH?
YOU?! THE LONER WITH AWFUL SOCIAL SKILLS?
I SHOULD HAVE INTRODUCED MYSELF SOONER. I'M FUMI NISHIOKA.
THIS GUY MANHANDLING ME IS KYUTARO HORIKITA. WE'RE BOTH SECOND-YEARS IN HIGH SCHOOL.
OH, BE QUIET. WE BOTH KNOW I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS.
SMOOSH
I'M SORRY. I LIED. I RESPECT YOU, BOSS.
YOU'RE GOOD AT CLEANING, A GREAT STUDENT, EASY ON THE EYES, GOOD AT CLEANING...

IT'S A LONG STORY, BUT...
OH! GRANNY, KOICHI...
HARD AT WORK, I SEE. THANK YOU.
FUMI. KYUTARO.
...I'M A LIVE-IN HOUSE-KEEPER AT THE HORIKITA MANSION.
CAN I HELP WITH SOME-THING ?
I WANTED TO PICK HERBS FOR MY TEA.
THE HERB GARDEN IS LOVELY RIGHT NOW.
I'M ALSO AN APPRENTICE IN THEIR FAMILY BUSINESS.
THAT'S RIGHT.
OF COURSE! THIS IS OUR FAMILY BUSI-NESS.
YOU'RE BEING SO STRICT, Q...
NO... I WAS ABOUT TO PUT THEM AWAY...
So picky...
YOUR TOOLS ARE DIRTY! DID YOU THINK YOU WERE DONE CLEANING ?
QUIT FLATTER-ING HER. SHE'S STILL GOT LOTS TO LEARN.
RAGH RAGH
OH, NOT AT ALL...
BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN TAKING GOOD CARE OF IT, FUMI.
INDEED IT IS.
Hee Hee
FIDGET

THE HORIKITAS ARE A FAMILY OF SWEEPERS.
THEY WASH AWAY THE ILL WILL AND SICKNESSES THAT EAT AWAY AT PEOPLE AND HELP CLEANSE THEM INSIDE.
TRUE.
EVERYDAY CLEANING IS VITAL TRAINING FOR US.
THE BEST WAY TO COMBAT ILL WILL IS WITH A SINCERE HEART.
CLEANING IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO CULTIVATE THAT.
SEE HOW BEAUTIFUL THE ELDERBERRY BLOSSOMS ARE THIS YEAR?
THEY'RE NOT YOUR TYPICAL CLEANERS!
THEY PROTECT SPECIAL DOORS THAT LEAD INTO PEOPLE'S MINDS.


ROOMS, OBJECTS, TREES AND PLANTS CAN TELL WHAT'S IN SOMEONE'S MIND.
IT'S BECAUSE FUMI HAS BEEN CARING FOR THEM WITH SINCERITY.
Q'S PARENTS PLANTED THIS PARTICULAR SHRUB.
THEY DID?
MM-HMM. THE YEAR Q WAS BORN.
IT'S A MEMENTO OF THE TWO OF THEM. IT PROTECTS THE FAMILY.
THE HORIKITAS ARE WONDER-FUL.
I WAS HOMELESS AND HAD NO FAMILY. EVERYONE ELSE ALWAYS TREATED ME LIKE A BOTHER...
We'll pick the flowers and make a cordial.
What's a cordial?
It's like a syrup. I'll teach you how to make it.
...BUT THEY TOOK ME IN. THEY TREAT ME LIKE FAMILY.
OH, RIGHT.
WE'RE HAVING A VISITOR SOON.
MAY I INTRODUCE YOU TO HIM, FUMI?
ME...?
YES. HE'S PART OF THE SWEEPER COMMU-NITY.
HE WAS AN UPPER-CLASSMAN AT MY UNIVER-SITY.
OH... MAYBE...

I WAS DISCUSSING YOUR AMNESIA WITH HIM.
HE SPECIALIZES IN HYPNOSIS AND MEMORY LOSS RESEARCH.
...HE'S MY PRINCE CHARMING!
SHING
You haven't changed your tune, hmm?
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
BUT HE'S A DOCTOR, AND HE ISN'T POOR.
Secret
Fumi Nishioka (16)
Life Goal: Finding Prince Charming
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
YOU DID THAT FOR ME?
...WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO.
IF HE CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT CAUSED IT, MAYBE...
HE SHOULD BE HERE IN A COUPLE OF HOURS.
LOOK FORWARD TO IT.
OH...
...
UNLIKE ME.
DON'T TALK LIKE THAT. KOICHI AND GRANNY LIKE BEING NICE TO YOU.
BUT... I'M JUST AN EMPLOYEE ...!
WHAT'S WITH THAT LOOK? IT'S NO BIG DEAL.

BUT I HAVE TO PUT THE TOOLS AWAY FIRST.
WHY DON'T YOU GO CHANGE BEFORE HE ARRIVES?
A-ALL RIGHT.
WAIT, NISHIOKA.
THERE'S SOMETHING ON YOUR EYE-LASHES.
RUB
REALLY? WHICH SIDE?
STOP IT, DUMMY! DON'T RUB IT.
SNARL
HUH ...?
HOLD STILL. I'LL GET IT. CLOSE YOUR EYES.
UM...
HERE.
HOLD STILL, I SAID.

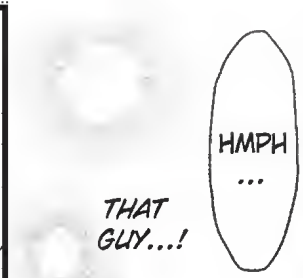
PUFF

OKAY.
GOT IT.

GOOD.
IT DIDN'T GET IN YOUR EYE.

SOMEONE WHO'S AWFUL AT COMMUNICATING = A NONCOMPOOP
HE HAS NO CONCEPT OF PERSONAL SPACE.
WHAT A NON-COM-POOP.
FSHH

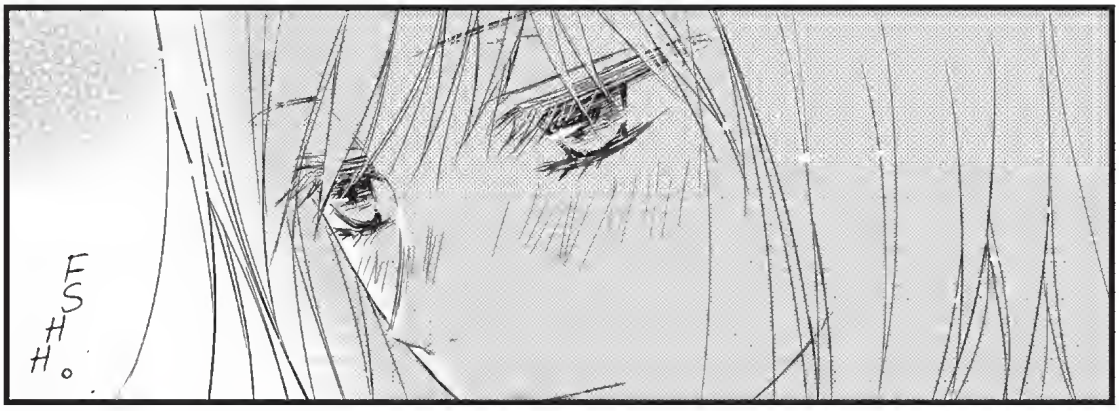
BUT...


HMPH ...
THAT GUY...!

SOMETIMES HE DOES STUFF LIKE THAT.

WHEN YOU'VE PUT EVERYTHING AWAY, GO WASH YOUR FACE.
It's a little dusty.
UH ...
'KAY ...

SEE YOU. I HAVE TO CLEAN THE ENTRYWAY.



I CAN'T.

...FALL IN LOVE WITH HIM.

I WILL NEVER...

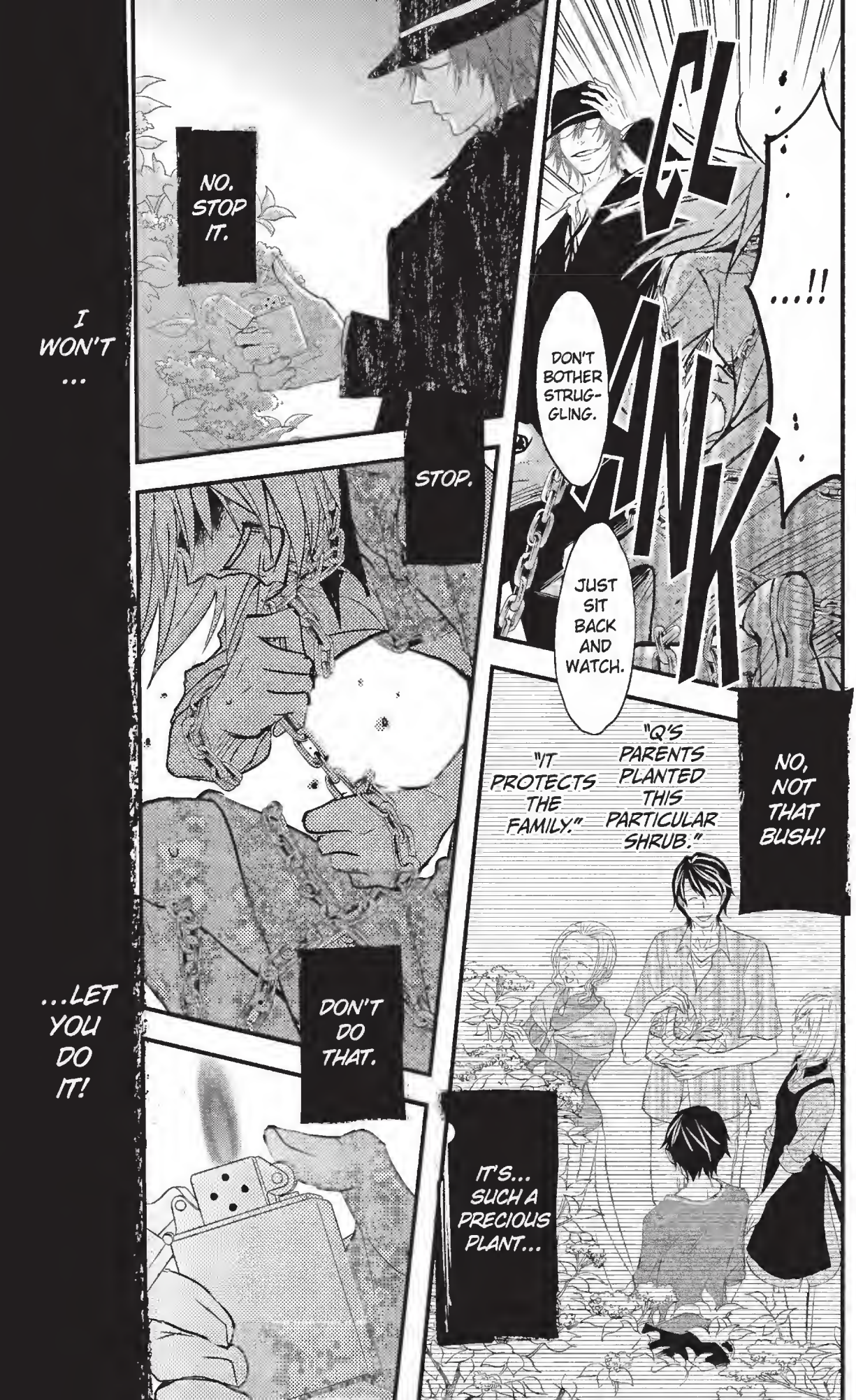
KYUTARO'S IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE.
"FUYU..."
HE'S LOVED HER SINCE THEY WERE LITTLE.
HE STILL DREAMS ABOUT HER.
INTERFERING IN ANOTHER PERSON'S PATH TO LOVE GOES AGAINST THE RULES OF MY PRINCE CHARMING QUEST!
SHAKE SHAKE
HE'S ABSO-LUTELY OFF-LIMITS.
THESE PEOPLE TAKE THE BEST CARE OF ME.
THERE'S NOTHING MORE I COULD WANT.
NOT A SINGLE THING.

THAT'S ALL I NEED.
I NEED TO REPAY THE WHOLE FAMILY'S KINDNESS...
...AND LIVE AN HONEST LIFE.
BUT IF I CAN FIND MYSELF A PRINCE CHARMING, I REALLY WON'T NEED ANYTHING ELSE.
Oh, and maybe some savings...
HELLO, YOUNG LADY.

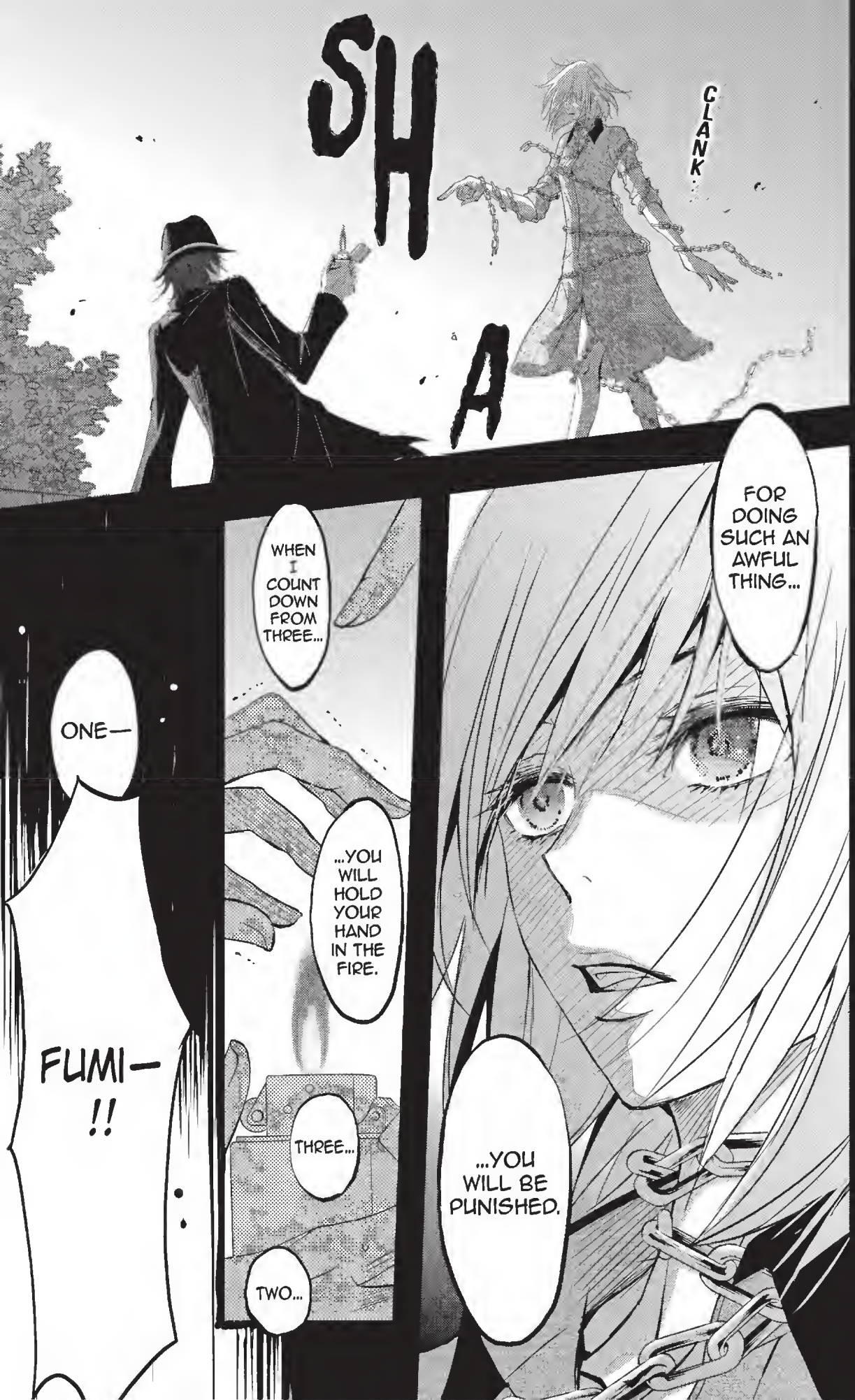
HUH ...?
WHO ARE...
...YOU?
I MUST SAY...
JUST A MAGICIAN PASSING THROUGH.
TAP
...YOU'RE LOOKING A BIT PALE.
YOU SEEM UN-WELL.
DON'T YOUR LIMBS FEEL HEAVY?
LOOK.

THEY'RE EVERY-WHERE.
I'M SORRY, BUT...
...THIS LITTLE EXPERI-MENT...
...IS MEANT TO...
...BRING OUT THE QUEEN INSIDE YOU.
...WRAPPED AROUND YOUR ARMS, LEGS AND NECK?
CAN YOU FEEL THE HEAVY STEEL CHAINS ...
WHAT ...?
YOU HAVE NO VOICE.
OH, AND ...
...THE HARDER YOU PULL, THE TIGHTER THEY GET.
SEE ?
YOU CAN'T MOVE AN INCH. NO POINT FIGHTING THEM.
SLUMP

THE... QUEEN... INSIDE...
SLO
SH
...ME?
WHAT ?
NOW...
WHAT ...
...IS ...?
CAN'T YOU TELL BY THE SMELL?
NO...
SPLOSH
SPLOSH
IT'S GASO-LINE.
HE'S NOT REALLY... PLANNING TO..!
SPL
ASH
LET'S TAKE THINGS FURTHER.
THIS IS A GLORIOUS ELDER-BERRY BUSH.
IT'S A PERFECT SACRI-FICE.


NO, NOT THAT BUSH!
"Q'S PARENTS PLANTED THIS PARTICULAR SHRUB."
"IT PROTECTS THE FAMILY."
IT'S... SUCH A PRECIOUS PLANT...
DON'T BOTHER STRUGGLING.
JUST SIT BACK AND WATCH.
CL
ANK
...!!
NO. STOP IT.
I WON'T ...
STOP.
DON'T DO THAT.
...LET YOU DO IT!

STOP.
IF THAT FLAME TOUCHES THAT PLANT, I WILL END YOU.
TURN AND FACE ME...
...AND GET ON YOUR KNEES.
SNAP


SHA
CLANK...
FOR DOING SUCH AN AWFUL THING...
...YOU WILL BE PUNISHED.
WHEN I COUNT DOWN FROM THREE...
...YOU WILL HOLD YOUR HAND IN THE FIRE.
THREE...
TWO...
ONE—
FUMI—!!

FUMI, CALM DOWN ...!
BMP
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
IT'S OKAY. COME ON...
WHA...
KYU-KYUTARO ...?
HUF
W-WHAT WAS I...

WHAT DID I JUST DO?
NOTHING HAPPENED. EVERYTHING'S FINE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT...
IT'S NOT FINE! HE POURED GASOLINE EVERYWHERE!
INCLUDING THAT SPECIAL ELDERBERRY BUSH!
AND HE PUT CHAINS ON ME—!
HUH?
THE CHAINS...
BUT... THEY WERE ALL OVER ME...
I'M SORRY.
THERE WERE NO CHAINS.
AND THIS ISN'T GASOLINE. IT'S JUST WATER.
IT WAS AN ILLUSION.
SORRY FOR TRICKING YOU.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO OUR FUMI?
THIS ISN'T FUNNY, TAKAYA!
HA HA HA... SORRY, KOICHI.

YOU WHAT?!
YOU CALL THAT A SURPRISE?! THAT WAS NOTHING BUT HARASSMENT, YOU—
WELL... I THOUGHT I'D SURPRISE YOU...
AND WHY ARE YOU HERE ALREADY?! WE SAID IN TWO HOURS!
GRAAH
AND SO...
...THIS IS TAKAYA KITAHARA.
PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, FUMI.
MY ANCESTORS WERE IN CHARGE OF THE GENBU GATE LIKE THE HORIKITAS.
I'M A PSYCHIATRIST.
AND I SNIFF PEOPLE A LOT.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
THAT'S DISGUSTING.
It's not nice to meet you!
CLATTER
IT'S PART OF MY RESEARCH.
SOMEONE'S SMELL TELLS ME A LOT ABOUT THEIR CHARACTER AND MENTAL STATE.
WATCH.
GRAB

STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
SNIFF SNIFF
CUT THAT OUT!
IT TELLS ME HIS HEART IS PURE AND FAITHFUL, AND SOMEWHAT ISOLATED...
...LIKE A TRANQUIL FOREST OF EVERGREENS AFTER A RAIN.
YES... Q ALWAYS SMELLS NICE AND FRESH...
GAH—!
HE'S SOMETHING OF A LETCH, BUT...
Touch her and I'll kill you.
I'd call that stomping, not lashing.
THAT'S MEAN, SENDAI.
Soft
HE DESERVED WORSE.
FORGIVE ME. I COULDN'T HELP LASHING OUT.
WHY DID YOU DO THAT TO NISHI-OKA?
YOU TOOK YOUR JOKE TOO FAR.
OH, NO. THAT WASN'T A JOKE.
EARLIER, YOU BELIEVED THERE WERE CHAINS AND GASOLINE, DIDN'T YOU?
THAT'S PART OF IT.
I USE A SPECIAL KIND OF HYPNOSIS.
...AMONG SWEEPERS, HE'S REGARDED AS OUT-STANDING.
AND HE'S AN EXPERT AT SUG-GESTIVE THERAPY.
WHAT IS THAT?

IF I HADN'T PUSHED HER THAT HARD...
...I COULDN'T HAVE SHOWN HER THE POWER SHE HOLDS AS A QUEEN.
QUEEN...
...DIDN'T YOU NOTICE HOW DRAMATIC-ALLY YOUR PERSONALITY CHANGED?
WHEN YOU WERE REACHING YOUR BREAKING POINT...
IT'S AT THE ROOT OF ALL HER PROB-LEMS.
WE'LL GET NOWHERE IF WE DON'T ADDRESS IT.
SHE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT QUEENS—
TAKAYA! I ASKED YOU TO ASSESS HER REGARD-ING HER MEMORY LOSS!
KLATTER
WELL, THAT WON'T DO.

MAYBE, BUT NOW ISN'T ...
UM...
WHEN HE SAYS "QUEEN," HE MEANS... ME?
IF SO, PLEASE TELL ME.
IT'S SCARY NOT KNOWING ABOUT MYSELF.
SENDAI, MAY I CONTIN-UE?
I SUP-POSE SO.
YOU CAN'T SAY THAT MUCH AND STOP.
QUEENS ARE ALWAYS FEMALE.
THEY DEVELOP FROM PEOPLE BORN WITH EXTREMELY RARE POWERS.
YOU HAVE THAT POWER LYING DORMANT WITHIN YOU.
IT'S AN INCREDIBLY STRONG ABILITY...
...TO CONTROL PEOPLE'S MINDS.
A QUEEN CAN FORCE ANY-ONE...
...AND EVERY-ONE...
...TO DO WHAT-EVER SHE WANTS.

ONCE A QUEEN AWAKENS, SHE CAN CONTROL THE MINDS OF HUNDREDS, OR EVEN THOUSANDS.
IF SHE SAYS DANCE, THEY WILL.
AND IF SHE SAYS *DIE*... THEY WILL.
IF A QUEEN AWAKENS AND IS MALEVOLENT...
...HER POISON WILL CAUSE COUNTLESS PEOPLE TO DIE FROM THE INSIDE OUT.
SO OUR PROBLEM IS...
...IT'S POSSIBLE THAT YOU'LL BECOME A BLACK QUEEN.
AND SOMEONE WHO WANTS THAT TO HAPPEN...
...IS AFTER YOU.

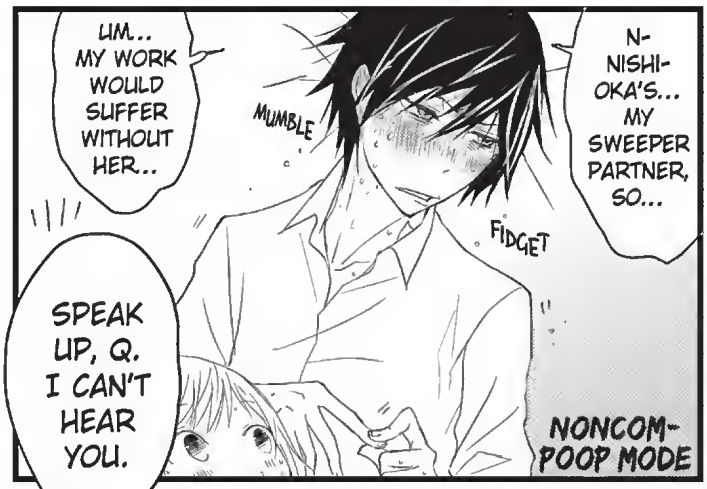
B-BMP
I THINK YOU'VE LOST YOUR CHILDHOOD MEMORIES...
...AND HAVE BEEN TORMENTED BY PEOPLE WHO CALLED YOU "CURSED"...
WHY...?
WHO...?
...AS PART OF A RITUAL TO MOLD YOU INTO A BLACK QUEEN.
I'M SORRY.
THERE'S NO TELLING WHEN THE BLACK QUEEN INSIDE YOU MIGHT AWAKEN.
WHEN THAT HAPPENS, NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO STOP YOU.
NO...
I...
THE QUEEN CAN'T HEAR ANYONE ELSE'S VOICE.
SHE'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE ONCE THAT MALEVOLENCE OVER-WHELMS YOUR WILL...
I REALLY AM A MONSTER.
YOU'LL HURT EVERYONE. EVEN THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE MOST.
BEFORE THAT HAPPENS—
WAIT JUST A MINUTE!
DOOM

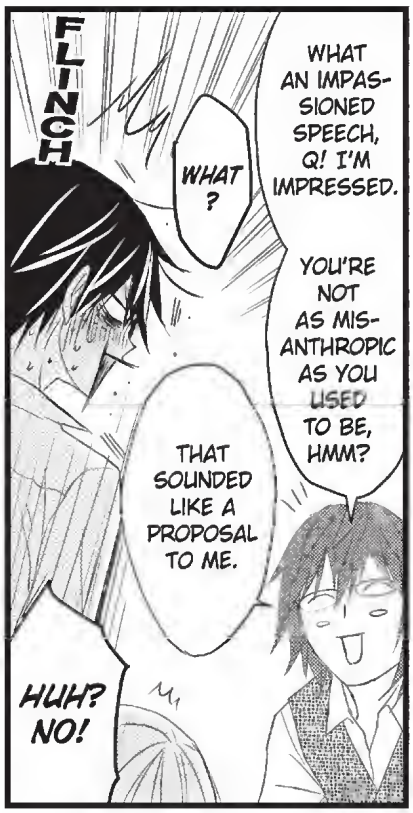
STOP TALKING ABOUT NISHIOKA LIKE SHE'S EVIL.
SHE SNAPPED OUT OF IT AS SOON AS I CALLED TO HER.
SO IT'S NOT TRUE THAT NO ONE CAN STOP HER.
NISHIOKA'S MY PARTNER. I KNOW HER.
THERE'S NO WAY SHE'LL BECOME A BLACK QUEEN.

HMM. THAT'S TRUE.
WHEN YOU SPOKE TO FUMI, THE EMERGING QUEEN RETREATED.
I ADMIT THAT SURPRISED ME.
BUT I SUSPECT YOUR VOICE IS THE ONLY ONE THAT CAN REACH HER.
FOR WHATEVER REASON ...
...YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WITH THAT CONNECTION TO HER.
WHAT...?
SO IN PRACTICE, SHE'S STILL A DANGER.
THE QUEEN'S AWAKENING COULD BE TRIGGERED ANYWHERE, AT ANY TIME.
YOU CAN'T ALWAYS BE THERE TO STOP IT.
YES, I CAN.

I'LL STAY WITH HER AT ALL TIMES.
I'LL NEVER LEAVE HER SIDE OR TAKE MY EYES OFF HER.
IF I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN PROTECT HER, THEN SO BE IT.
I WON'T LET ANYONE TAKE HER.

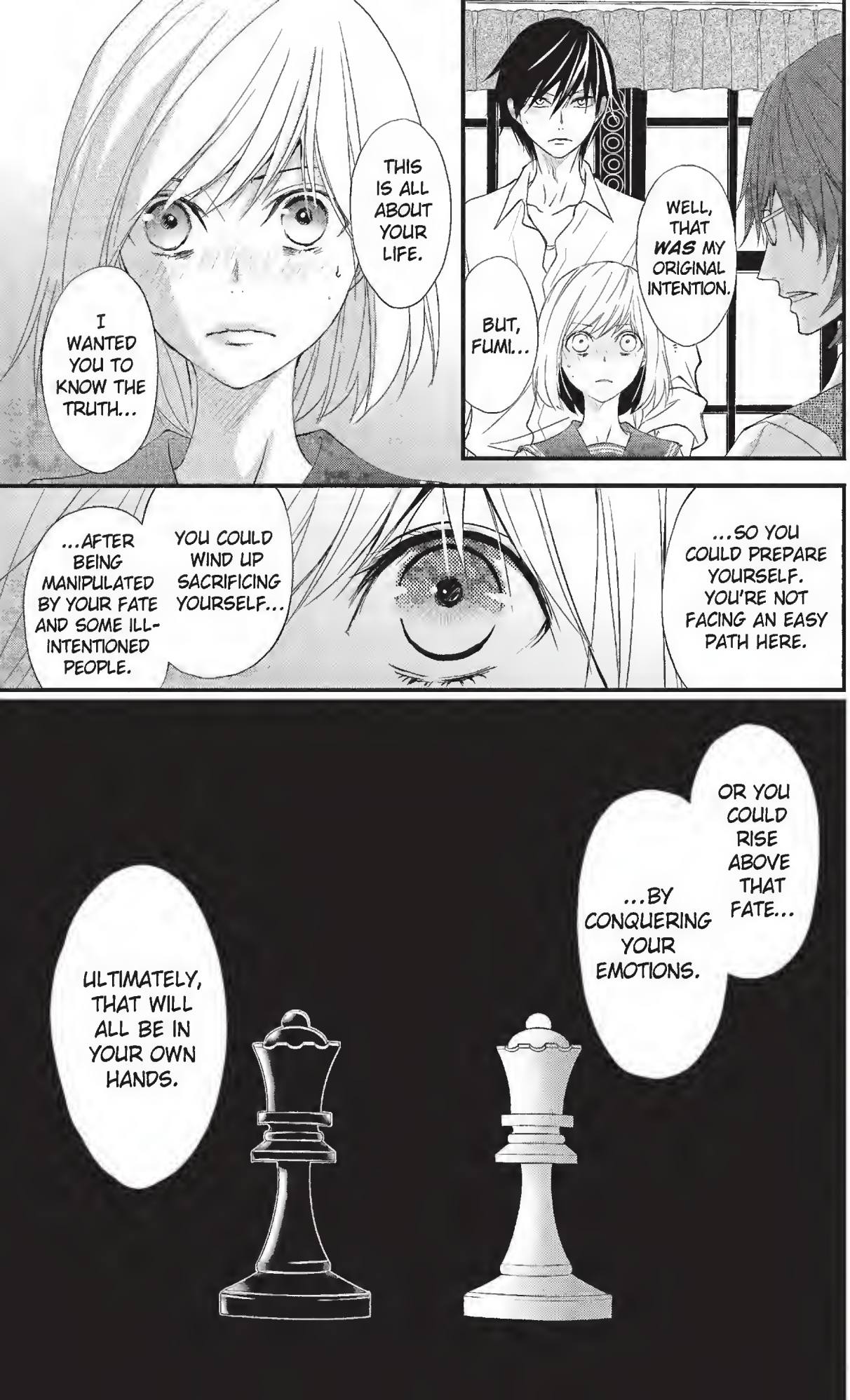
HA HA...

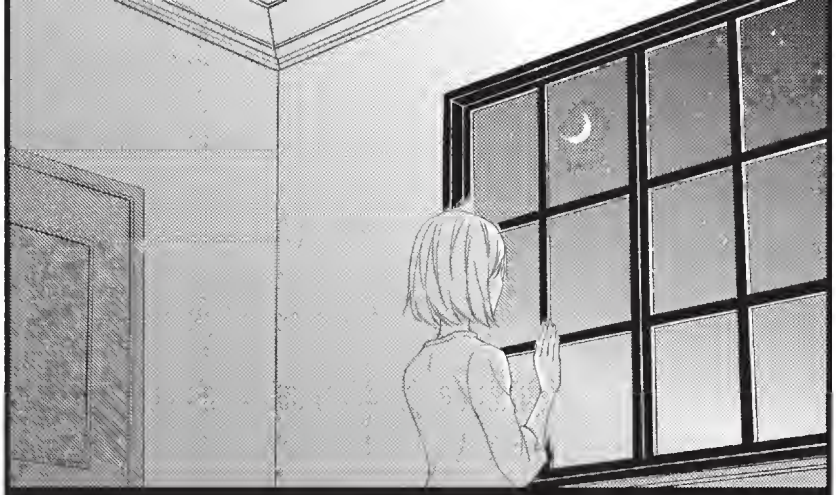

UM... MY WORK WOULD SUFFER WITHOUT HER...
MUMBLE
N-NISHI-OKA'S... MY SWEEPER PARTNER, SO...
FIDGET
SPEAK UP, Q. I CAN'T HEAR YOU.
NONCOM-POOP MODE


FLINCH
WHAT?
WHAT AN IMPAS-SIONED SPEECH, Q! I'M IMPRESSED.
YOU'RE NOT AS MIS-ANTHROPIC AS YOU USED TO BE, HMM?
THAT SOUNDED LIKE A PROPOSAL TO ME.
HUH? NO!

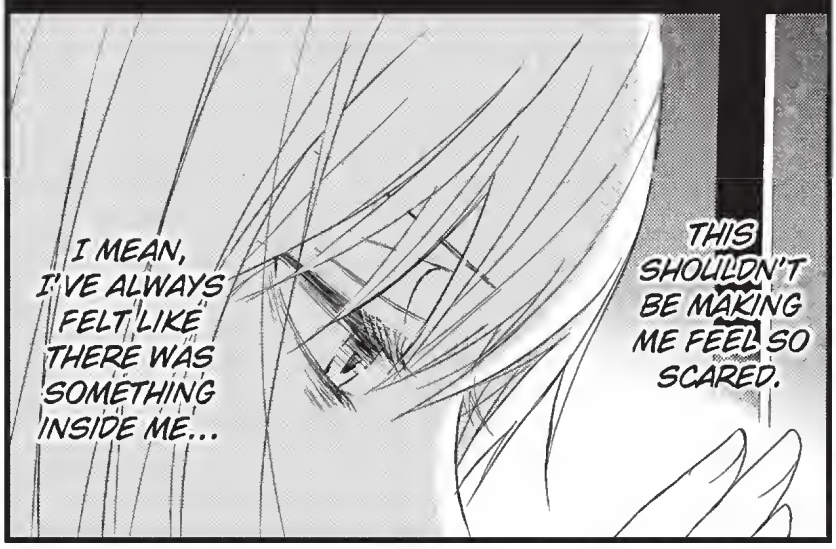
TAKAYA.
SHUP

I UNDER-STAND YOUR CON-CERN.
HOW-EVER, OUR FAMILY HAD ALL THAT IN MIND...
...WHEN WE DECIDED TO PROTECT FUMI.
NOT ALL QUEENS TURN OUT TO BE BLACK QUEENS.
ISN'T THAT SO?
WE'D NEVER PERMIT SOME INSOLENT INDIVIDUAL TO BEND FUMI TO THEIR WILL.
WE'LL USE ALL OF OUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS...
...TO GUIDE HER ONTO THE RIGHT PATH.
WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR GUIDANCE...
...TAKA-YA.


I WANTED YOU TO KNOW THE TRUTH...
THIS IS ALL ABOUT YOUR LIFE.
BUT, FUMI...
WELL, THAT WAS MY ORIGINAL INTENTION.
...AFTER BEING MANIPULATED BY YOUR FATE AND SOME ILL-INTENTIONED PEOPLE.
YOU COULD WIND UP SACRIFICING YOURSELF...
...SO YOU COULD PREPARE YOURSELF. YOU'RE NOT FACING AN EASY PATH HERE.
ULTIMATELY, THAT WILL ALL BE IN YOUR OWN HANDS.
...BY CONQUERING YOUR EMOTIONS.
OR YOU COULD RISE ABOVE THAT FATE...



"THERE'S NO TELLING WHEN THE BLACK QUEEN INSIDE YOU MIGHT AWAKEN."



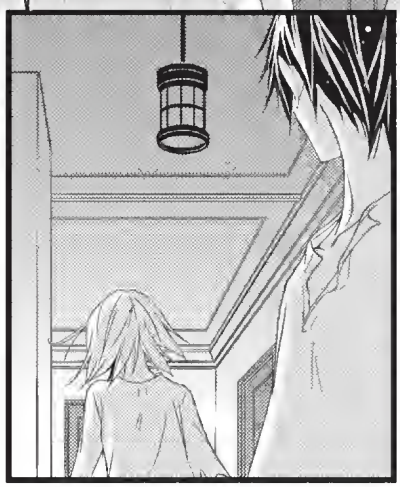
I'M SORRY ABOUT ALL THE TROUBLE TODAY.
WHAT A MESS, HUH?
Heh heh
NO, I JUST GOT UP TO USE THE BATH-ROOM.
I'M FINE, HONEST.
K-KYUTARO ...?
YOU'RE NOT FINE. DON'T LIE.
YOUR VOICE IS SHAKING.

HMPH!
HUFF HUFF
YOU NON-COMPOOP! IF YOU DO THAT TO MOST PEOPLE, THEY'LL GET THE WRONG IDEA.
But I appreciate how nice you're being.
UM, NO.
IF YOU TELL A GIRL YOU'RE NOT INTO THAT YOU LIKE HER, YOU'LL CAUSE ALL SORTS OF PROBLEMS.
WITH OTHER PEOPLE, I WOULDN'T ...

SQUEEZE
I AM FINE! I REALLY AM!
YOU'RE MISCALCULATING HOW CLOSE YOU SHOULD STAND!

I KNOW ...
...THAT YOU LOVE SOMEONE.
I KNOW ABOUT FUYU.
SO I WON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA.

I DON'T LOVE HIM.



OH, I'M RAMBLING!
HEH HEH...
GOOD NIGHT!

I'M FINE.
I DON'T LOVE HIM. I HAVEN'T LET IT GET THAT FAR.
I HAVEN'T FALLEN...
...IN LOVE WITH HIM.

TMP TMP

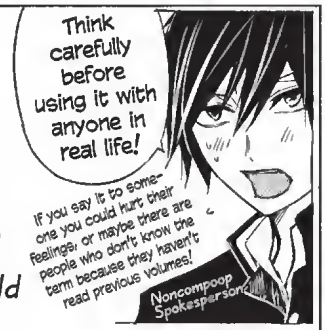
I LOVE YOU.
I ALWAYS HAVE.

...AND THAT WE KISSED...
...BUT I REMEMBER IT ALL.
YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THAT YOUR NAME USED TO BE FUYU...

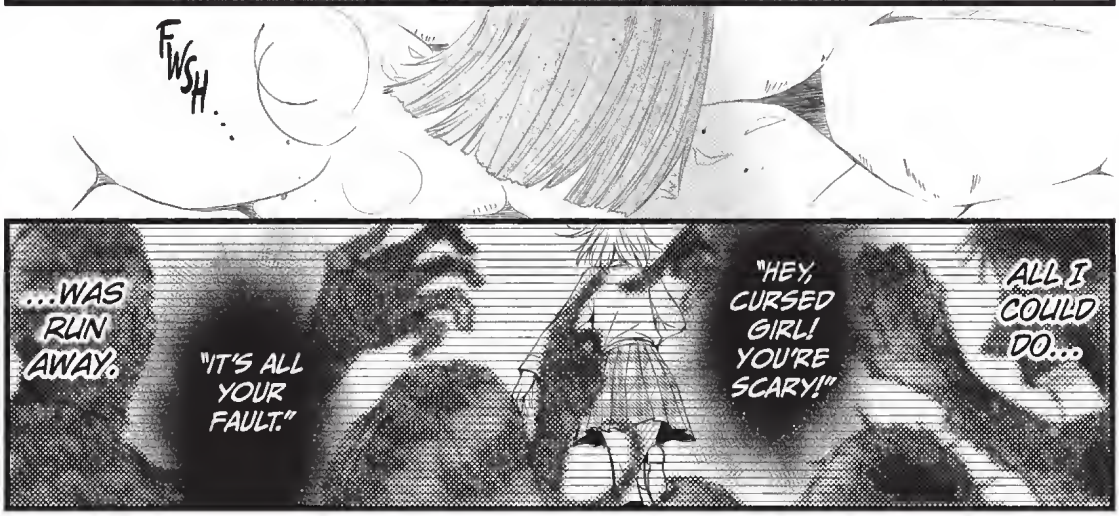
WILL YOU EVER REMEMBER?
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH...
...IT HURTS.

Chapter 2

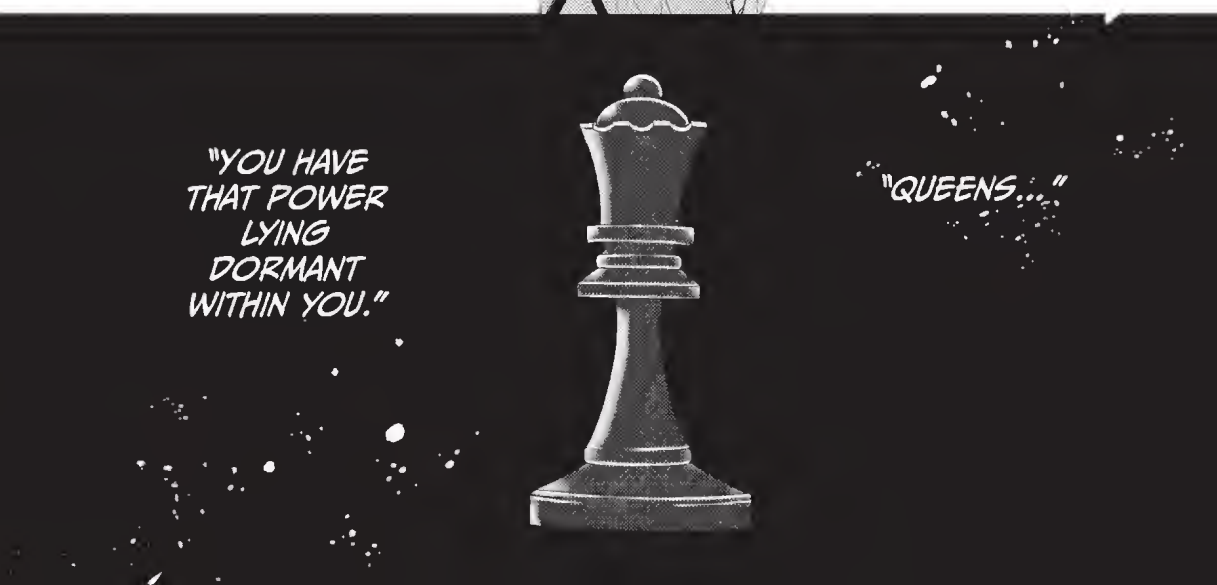
"Noncompoop" is one of the few new terms that are coming up in Queen's Quality (although there's also a new character). To be honest, I no longer felt comfortable with the term I was using before (it involved the word "disorder"), so I quickly came up with this new one. It's a bit vulgar—sorry about that! Of course, it's always possible that terms like this could hurt some people, but I need something to express the concept for this story. So I plan to use "noncompoop" with great care, and I'll try to always follow it up within 0.2 seconds with a line expressing love and respect for that person.



I'VE LIVED MY WHOLE LIFE...
...NOT KNOWING THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF...
...OR ABOUT MY STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES.


FWSH...
...WAS RUN AWAY.
"IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT."
"HEY, CURSED GIRL! YOU'RE SCARY!"
ALL I COULD DO...

...OR WHAT I'D DONE WRONG.
...WHAT I WAS RUNNING FROM...
I NEVER KNEW...


"YOU HAVE THAT POWER LYING DORMANT WITHIN YOU."
"QUEENS..."

"I THINK YOU'VE LOST YOUR CHILDHOOD MEMORIES...
"...AND HAVE BEEN TORMENTED BY PEOPLE WHO CALLED YOU 'CURSED'...
"...AS PART OF A RITUAL TO MOLD YOU INTO A BLACK QUEEN.
RUSTLE
CHIRP
"I'M SORRY.
"THERE'S NO TELLING WHEN THE BLACK QUEEN INSIDE YOU MIGHT AWAKEN."
RUSTLE

TAKE THAT!
"BLACK QUEEN"? WHO CARES?!
YOU THINK I'LL CHICKEN OUT? I'M READY FOR YOU! C'MON OUT!

AH... FUMI?
WHY ARE YOU YELLING SO EARLY IN THE MORNING?
GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE.
I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING FOR YOU AGAIN TODAY.
PLEASE TRAIN ME HARDER THAN EVER!
THERE'S NO NEED TO BE PESSIMISTIC. THE TRUTH IS, I'M LUCKY!
I KNOW WHO MY ENEMY IS NOW. SHE'S INSIDE ME.
I DON'T NEED TO RUN ANYMORE. I'LL JUST FIGHT HER.
EVEN KNOWING THAT MUCH IS LUCKY, REALLY! I'M ITCHING FOR A FIGHT.

I'M NOT GONNA LET SOME FREAKY CONCEPT LIKE A "BLACK QUEEN" BEAT ME!
NO MATTER HOW BADLY PEOPLE TREATED ME, LIKE I WAS A JINX...
...I ALWAYS MADE SURE TO STAY POSITIVE AS I CHASED MY CINDERELLA HAPPY ENDING! I'M A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH!
FUMI, WHERE'RE YOU HEADED?
WE'RE HAVING LUNCH NOW.
THE BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE HAS TO PATROL TODAY.
I'll eat in the committee room.
OH... SEE YA...
THIS SCHOOL...
Wait— is patrolling a club activity?
Where's their room?
Fumi's on the Beautification Committee?

HEY, DID YOU HEAR?
KANNA AND CLASS F'S KURAKI BROKE UP.
SHE RUNS THE CINEMA CLUB.
I HEAR SHE CHEATED WITH THE VP.
BUT SHE'S PLAYING INNOCENT. SHE SAYS THEY JUST TALKED.
WGGL...
THAT GIRL'S THE WORST.
...IS FULL OF FILTH AND MALICE, SO IT'S INFESTED WITH BUGS.
SKRTCH
IT'S THE SWEEPER'S ROLE TO GET RID OF THAT SORT OF BUG.
KANNA'S GETTING TORN APART.
UGLY GIRLS GET JEALOUS. GIRLS ARE SCARY.
IT LOOKS LIKE THE CINEMA CLUB'S GETTING SHUT DOWN.
Oh, shut up.
Just pay us back for the camera.
Quit picking on someone weaker than you!
Kanna, don't cry.
THE MEMBERS KEEP ARGUING... I HEAR THEY WERE FIGHTING IN THE CLUBROOM.

HEY, KYUTARO!
THANKS FOR YOUR HARD WORK.
I'LL MAKE THE ROUNDS AND CLEAN UP LATER.
She's weird— but kinda cute.
Is that girl friends with the cleaner?
I SAID I DON'T NEED YOU. GO EAT WITH YOUR FRIENDS.
SNUB
JUST GO AWAY. DON'T TALK TO ME.
HOW MEAN!
SHOCK
Why can't I talk to you...?
AND I'M SUCH AN ENTHUSIASTIC SWEEPER TOO!

NEVER MIND.
KOICHI WANTED TO SEE YOU, RIGHT? BETTER GET GOING.
KYUTARO'S ALWAYS A LITTLE UNFRIENDLY, BUT...
...IN SCHOOL, HE'S EVEN COLDER.
I GUESS HE'S JUST HIS USUAL SELF.
At school he's a loner.

IF THAT'S HOW I REALLY FEEL...
...THEN I'M THE STUPID ONE.
"I'LL STAY WITH HER AT ALL TIMES.
"I'LL NEVER LEAVE HER SIDE OR TAKE MY EYES OFF HER."
JUST YESTER-DAY, HE SAID ALL THAT!
STUPID KYUTARO! HE'S SUCH A LIAR.
MUTTER
HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
THE QUEEN IS MY PROBLEM.
ANYONE WHOSE FIRST THOUGHT IS TO RELY ON SOMEONE ELSE...
...ISN'T CAPABLE OF MOVING FORWARD.
I CAN'T DEPEND ON OTHER PEOPLE BEING KIND TO ME.

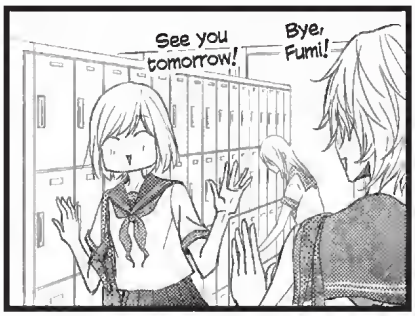
PLEASE TEACH ME HOW TO NOT BECOME A BLACK QUEEN...
...I'M HOPING YOU'LL HELP ME, DR. KITAHARA.
THAT'S WHY...
I'D APPRECIATE ANY INSTRUCTION YOU CAN GIVE ME.
...AND... ...HOW TO FIND WHOEVER'S TRYING TO TURN ME INTO ONE.
WELL, WHY NOT?
WE DIDN'T MEAN FOR YOU TO—
STOP THAT, FUMI.
...EVEN IF IT TAKES MY WHOLE LIFE. WHAT WILL IT COST ME?
I'M NOT ASKING FOR FREE HELP.
I'LL REPAY YOU, NO MATTER WHAT I HAVE TO DO...

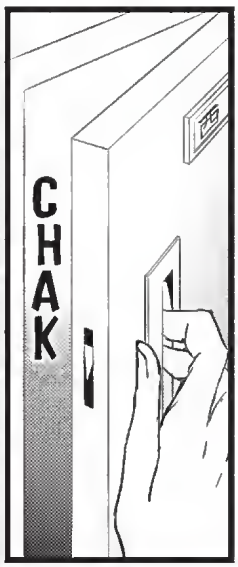
I WAS EXPECTING TEARS AND MELO-DRAMA...
...BUT I WAS WRONG. YOU'VE GOT GRIT.
IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDER-STAND THAT KINDNESS ISN'T FREE.
AND I LIKE THE LOOK IN YOUR EYES.
KLNK
GIVEN THAT...
...I'LL GIVE YOU A TEST...
...TO SEE IF YOU'RE WORTH MY TIME.
IT WILL SHOW ME...
...IF YOU'RE TRULY UP FOR BATTLING ...
...THE QUEEN INSIDE YOU.
TAKA-YA!
NO, LET ME DO THIS.
WELL, FUMI?
IT'S A DEAL.
ALL RIGHT. I'LL GET WORD TO YOU ABOUT WHAT IT'LL ENTAIL.
AND...

...WHETHER OR NOT YOU TELL KYUTARO ABOUT THIS TEST IS UP TO YOU...
Oof.
...BUT THAT'S PART OF THE TEST TOO.
SO LONG, KOICHI. THANKS FOR THE TEA!
HEY, HOLD ON!
WILL YOU PLEASE LEARN PROPER TEA CEREMONY ETIQUETTE?
HMPH.
TRY NOT TO TAKE HIM TOO SERIOUSLY, FUMI.
TAKAYA CAN BE SUCH A PAIN.
NO, IT'S FINE.
TESTING ME ONLY MAKES SENSE.
I DON'T PLAN TO CAUSE TROUBLE FOR KYUTARO.
OKAY, I WON'T PUSH YOU.
LISTEN, THOUGH.
HUH?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN BETWEEN YOU TWO?
N-NO! NOTHING!
TWITCH

MENTAL CONTROL IS VITAL FOR SWEEPERS.
IT TAKES A STRONG MIND TO CONTROL OTHER MINDS. THAT'S OUR JOB.
THE QUALITIES YOU'LL NEED TO CONTROL THE QUEEN ...
...ARE VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL TO THOSE OF A GOOD SWEEPER.
IT ENABLES US TO RETURN ANY ENVIRON-MENT OR MIND...
THAT'S WHY WE REPEAT OUR TASKS EACH DAY.
...TO ITS ORIGINAL STATE.
IN ORDER TO BE CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN DO THAT...
...WE PRACTICE THE BASIC RITUALS.

AT THIS POINT, IT'S ABSOLUTELY FINE...
...IF YOU RELY ON SOMEONE WHO'S BETTER AT THAT THAN YOU ARE.


See you tomorrow!
Bye, Fumi!


CHAK

I KNOW HOW GREAT KYUTARO IS.
I DO KNOW...
...BUT...

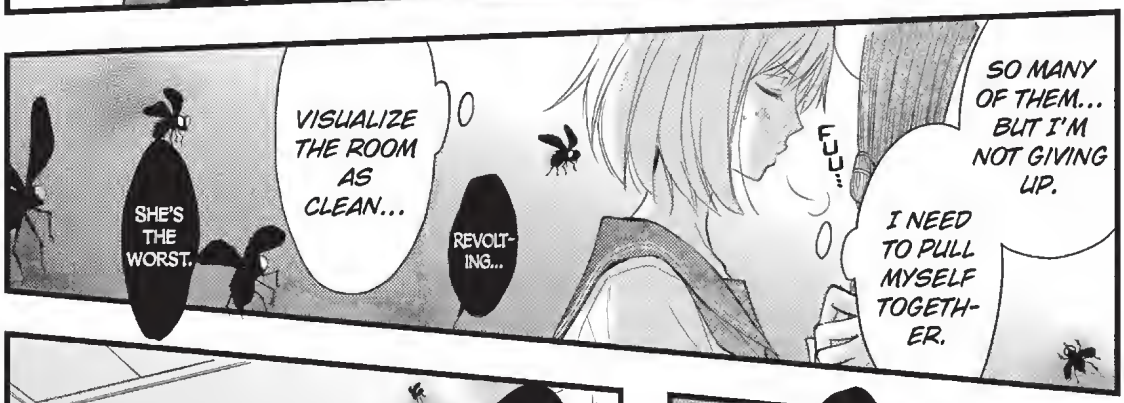
IT'S FROM DR. KITAHARA!
RUSTLE
DOOM
*This is not a love letter!
Takaya Secret Document
!!
To: Fumi Nishioka
Here's how the test will work.
By the end of the day, you must deal with the Cinema Club's clubroom. After any sudden environmental contamination, an infestation of bugs is highly possible.
You will work alone.
Let me remind you that this test is to verify your understanding that you have the unique traits of a
IT'S ABOUT THE TEST.
HMM? A TEST?
WAIT— TAKAYA SENT THIS TO YOU?

G-GIVE THAT BACK!
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
I CAN'T LET YOU GO ALONE.
YOU CAN'T COME!
IT SAYS I HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE!
THE QUEEN IS MY PROBLEM.
I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR ANYONE. NOT EVEN YOU, KYUTARO.
WHY NOT?
IT'S NO TROUBLE ...
LIAR.
JUST TALKING ABOUT IT...
...MADE YOU LOOK ANNOYED.

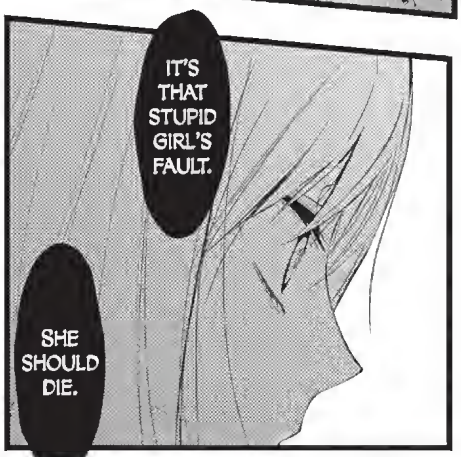
WHY DID I SAY THAT?
I'M SO STUPID.
STUPID...
...LIKE I'M WHINING.
IT SOUNDS...
I AM NOT GOING TO...
...MIS-INTERPRET HIS KINDNESS.
I'M DELUDING MYSELF.
I KNOW KYUTARO TRIES TO COVER HOW BAD HE IS AT COMMUNICATING BY ACTING ALOOF. IT'S HARD TO EVEN WATCH...
I'M SUCH AN IDIOT.
Not intentionally being mean
...BUT HERE I AM CAUSING HIM MORE PROB-LEMS.

NO MATTER WHAT'S INSIDE ME...
...I WANT TO STAND ON MY OWN TWO FEET.
THAT'S ALL.
KUROKADO HIGH SCHOOL Cinema Club
CINEMA
EXCUSE ME!
SQUEAK
HELLO? I'M WITH THE BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE.
NO ONE'S HERE?
I WONDER IF THE CINEMA CLUB'S DEFUNCT.
THE ROOM'S A LITTLE MESSY, BUT...
...MORE IMPORTANTLY...
...THE ATMOSPHERE FEELS DEPRESSING.
WGGL...WGGL...WGGL...

I MAY BE A NOVICE, BUT I'M A SWEEPER!
SLAP
YOU'RE NOT GONNA CHASE ME AWAY!
CONSIDERING HOW GLOOMY IT IS, I'M NOT SURPRISED THERE ARE BUGS HERE.
BUGS...!
WGGL
!!
WGGL
WGGL
WGGL


SHE'S THE WORST.
VISUALIZE THE ROOM AS CLEAN...
REVOLTING...
FUU...
SO MANY OF THEM... BUT I'M NOT GIVING UP.
I NEED TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER.

OUR CLUB'S RUINED. IT'S DONE FOR.
IT'S YOUR FAULT!
WGGL
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING! YOU'RE ALL SO MEAN.
SHUT UP, UGLY.
AHH

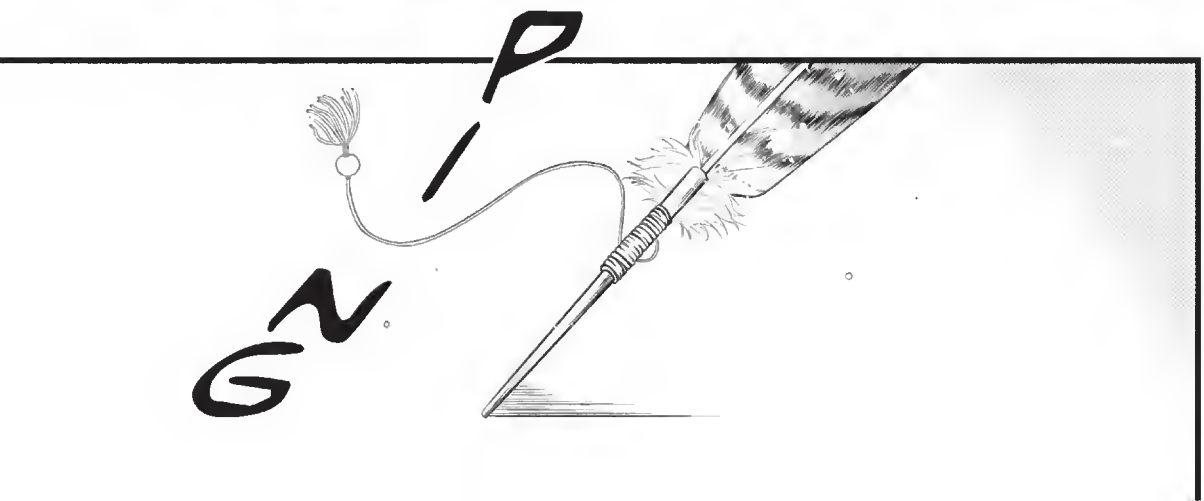

IT'S THAT STUPID GIRL'S FAULT.
SHE SHOULD DIE.

YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVED ME? THAT'S JUST SAD.
IT'S HER FAULT.
IT'S THE WORST. SHE'S DISGUST-ING. SHE SHOULD JUST DIE.
WHAT ARE YOU LAUGH-ING ABOUT? I'LL KILL YOU.
B-B-BMP.
WHAT IS THIS?
SHUT UP! YOU DIE!
DIE, YOU DOG.
NO...
I'LL KILL YOU!
S-STAY BACK...
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
NO...!
"THERE'S NO TELLING WHEN THE BLACK QUEEN INSIDE YOU MIGHT AWAKEN."
CREAK
IT'S NO GOOD. I'M LOSING FOCUS.
I CAN'T CONCEN-TRATE THROUGH ALL THIS MALICE—
HURRY UP AND DIE.
THUD
OH...
OH NO.
DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO!

CURSE... YOU...
FSSSS
AHH...
KYU-TARO...
TALK LATER. JUST LISTEN TO ME.
FIRST, EXHALE. GET ALL THE AIR OUT.
O-OKAY...
MULTIPLE SOURCES OF RESENTMENT OR HUMILI-ATION...
...CAN MANIFEST INTO A LARGER FORM LIKE THAT.
BUT IT'S STILL A *BUG*— THE SPIRIT OF EVIL INTENTIONS THAT HAVE DIED.
YOU NEED TO UTTERLY DESPISE MALICIOUS THINGS LIKE THAT.
THEY'RE NOT WORTH YOUR CONCERN.

B-BBMP
THE SOUND...
...OF HIS HEART...
...IS ALL I CAN HEAR.
WE'LL BEGIN NOW.
B-BBMP
KYUTARO'S VOICE...
DEEPER. CAN YOU DO IT?
YES.
THERE YOU GO.
HIS BODY HEAT...
B-BBMP
EXHALE COM-PLETELY.
BREATHE OUT ALL THE WAY DOWN TO HERE.
OKAY.
TOTAL CONCEN-TRATION.
RIGHT.

WE'LL GUIDE ALL PRESENCES HERE...
WE ARE SWEEPERS.
...DOWN THE MIDDLE PATH.
BEGONE BY THE TIME I COUNT DOWN FROM THREE.
ALL THAT EXISTS ONLY TO UNDER-MINE...
THREE...
TWO...
ONE.
TAP


SNIP

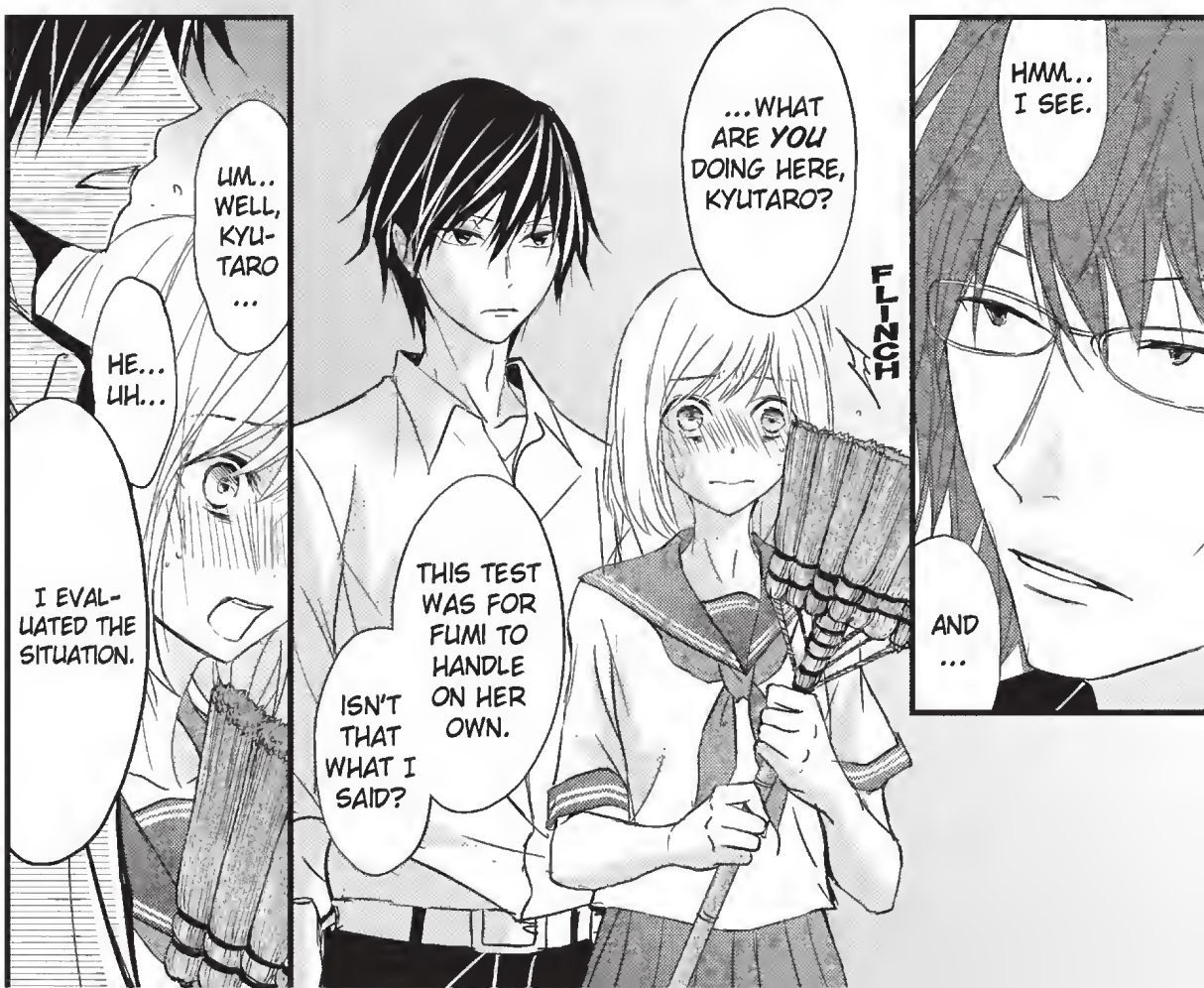
HMM...
YEAH, THAT SHOULD DO IT.

NISHIOKA, COME BACK.
TWITCH
SMOOSH
H-HOKAY!
THWACK
THWACK
YOU ALL RIGHT? TAKE SOME DEEP BREATHS.
COME ALL THE WAY BACK.
Y-YES.

UH...
K-KYUTARO, WHAT DID I...
HELLO!
IS BEAUTIFI-CATION COMMITTEE MEMBER FUMI THERE?
THIS IS KITAHARA. I'M COMING IN.

WELL...
BEGGING YOUR PARDON.

THE POLLUTION WAS SO SEVERE THAT THERE WAS A LARGER MANIFES-TATION.
WE ERADI-CATED THEM.
DID YOU USE SOME SORT OF MAGIC, NOT JUST INTIMIDA-TION?
THERE'S NO SIGN OF BUGS.


UM... WELL, KYU-TARO ...
HE... UH...
I EVAL-UATED THE SITUATION.
ISN'T THAT WHAT I SAID?
THIS TEST WAS FOR FUMI TO HANDLE ON HER OWN.
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, KYUTARO?
FLINCH
HMM.. I SEE.
AND ...

I SWORE THAT I'D STAY BY NISHIOKA'S SIDE...
...IN CASE I HAD TO KEEP HER SAFE BY REINING THE QUEEN IN.
HELPING MAY HAVE CAUSED HER TO FAIL THE TEST OR FACE SOME PENALTY, BUT...
...I BELIEVED HER SAFETY WAS THE TOP PRIORITY.
THAT WAS MY ASSESS-MENT.
HUH ?
YES.
THAT WAS THE CORRECT ANSWER.

...MUST RECOGNIZE HOW DANGEROUS THE QUEEN'S POWERS WITHIN YOU ARE.
YOU, MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE...
FUMI.
THIS WAS A RISK-MANAGE-MENT TEST.
YOU, AS QUEEN, MUST BE PREPARED FOR THAT.
OTHER-WISE YOU AND EVERYONE AROUND YOU WILL BE IN DANGER.
...THAT YOU WORK IN TANDEM WITH KYUTARO. HE'S YOUR SAFETY NET.
NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, IT'S IMPERA-TIVE...
NOT KNOWING YOUR LIMITS IS AS BAD AS DEPENDING ON OTHER PEOPLE TOO MUCH.
HOWEVER, IT'S NOT ALWAYS BEST TO TRY TO DO EVERYTHING YOURSELF.
...I'LL BE LENIENT AND GIVE YOU A PASSING MARK.
BUT SINCE YOUR PARTNER KEPT THINGS AFLOAT ...
TO BE HONEST, YOU FAILED TODAY.

REALLY, YOU NEED FAR MORE TRAINING.
YOU CAN START BY CLEANING THIS ROOM.
U-UH, TAKAYA ...
YOU'RE WRONG. I WAS THE ONE WHO...
NEVER MIND. JUST COME ALONG.
TAKE OVER, WILL YOU, KOICHI?
KYUTARO, WITH ME. I WANT A REPORT ON THAT LARGER MANIFESTATION.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
RUB
CHAK...
...AND EMBARRASSING...
IT'S FRUSTRATING...
YES, I'M FINE.
I'LL KEEP WORKING.
CLEANING IS A GREAT DISTRACTION.

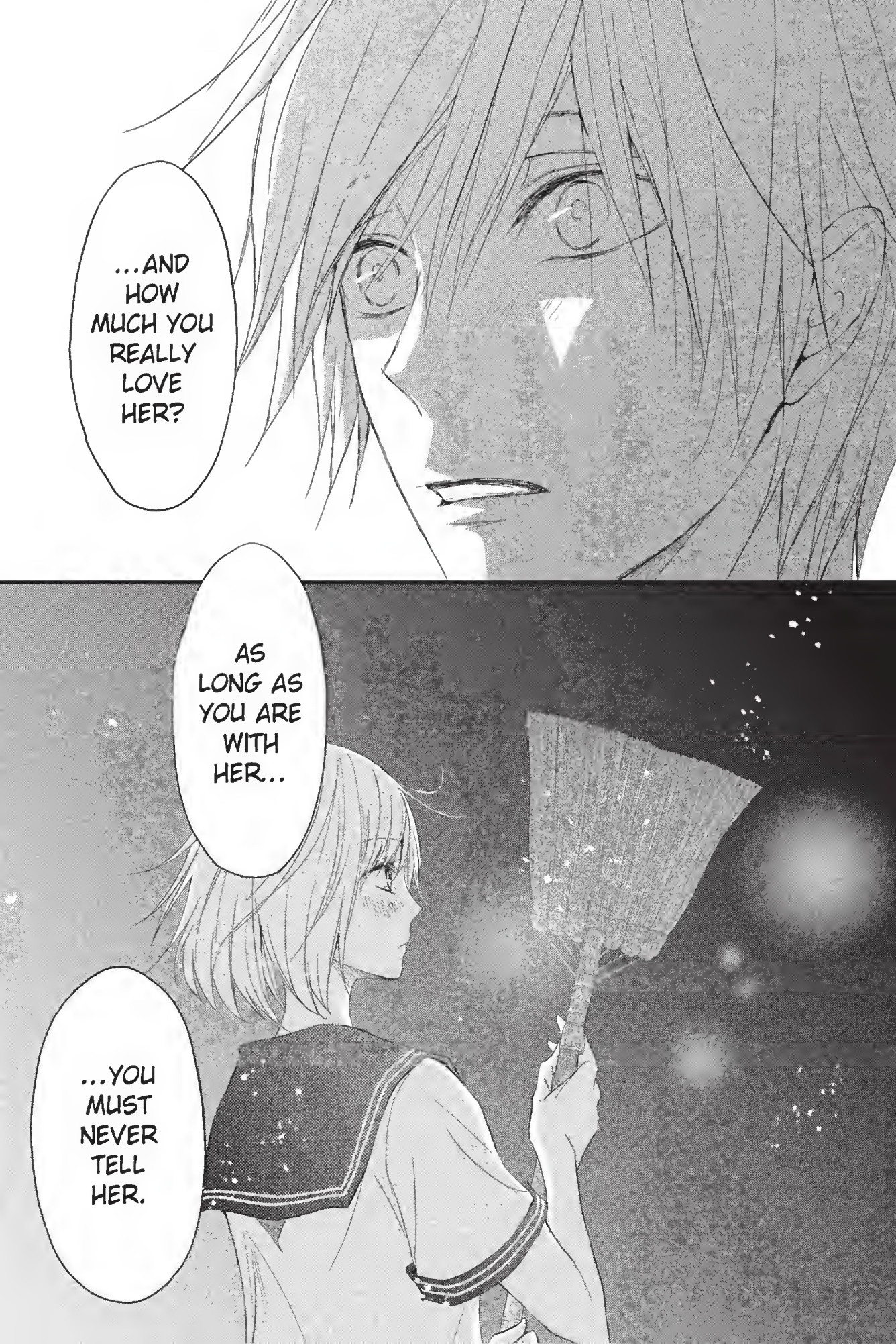
I'LL DO MY BEST!
MORE THAN YOU HAVE BEEN!
PLEASE BE HARDER ON ME.
BUT I'M NOT GIVING UP.
BUG CATCHERS CLU
TO BE HONEST...
...I WAS EQUALLY TO BLAME FOR NISHIOKA GOING ALONE.
I FIGURED AS MUCH.
AT SCHOOL YOU PASS YOURSELF OFF AS ALOOF AND LACKING COMMUNI-CATION SKILLS.
I IMAGINE YOU TREATED HER COLDLY.
You were worried that she'd start isolating herself too?
Ha ha ha!
Y-YEAH.
YOU SHOULDN'T TREAT HER LIKE THAT. SHE'S IMPORTANT TO YOU, ISN'T SHE?
KOICHI TOLD ME THE SITUA-TION.

HE SAYS SHE'S FUYU...
...THE GIRL YOU WERE FRIENDS WITH TEN YEARS AGO.
BUT SHE DOESN'T REMEMBER THOSE DAYS.
IT'S GREAT THAT YOU GOT TO MEET HER AGAIN.
YOU LIKED HER SO MUCH THAT YOU COULDN'T FORGET HER.
DO YOU LIKE HER EVEN MORE NOW?
D-DO WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THAT NOW?
YOU WANTED TO HEAR ABOUT THAT MANIFES-TATION, DIDN'T YOU? THAT THING—
KYUTARO.
I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THAT GIRL.
TO KEEP HER FROM TURNING INTO A BLACK QUEEN...
...THERE IS A CONDITION FOR YOU TOO.

YOU MUST NEVER LET HER REMEMBER...
...WHAT SHE'S FORGOTTEN ABOUT IN HER PAST.
CAN YOU PROMISE THAT?

WHOEVER SEALED HER MEMORY AWAY HAS PROBABLY...
...SET A TRAP.
THE INSTANT SHE REGAINS HER MEMORY, THE BLACK QUEEN WILL BEGIN TO AWAKEN.

WILL YOU BE ABLE TO HANDLE...
...NOT TELLING FUMI WHO SHE IS OR WAS?
THAT YOU SPENT TIME TOGETHER LONG AGO...


...AND HOW MUCH YOU REALLY LOVE HER?
AS LONG AS YOU ARE WITH HER...
...YOU MUST NEVER TELL HER.

Follow me on Twitter! @motomikyosuke

Basically you'll just hear me muttering about my boring life, but on the days ***Betsucomi*** comes out, you might find illustrations like this one.

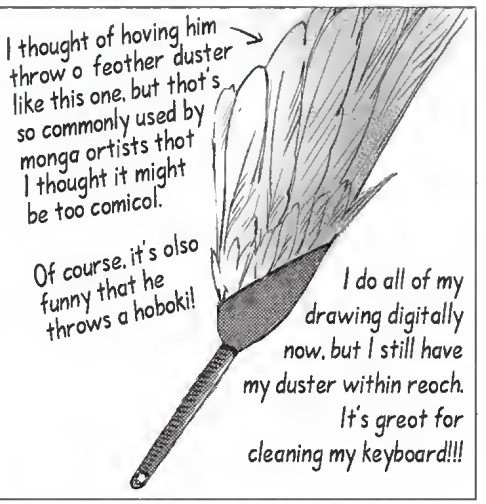
(This is from when QQ vol. 1 came out.)

Sometimes you'll see illustrations cut from older works or occasionally artwork created just for posting. Please take a look when you can!

Chapter
3

TAKE THAT!

Kyutaro's weapon in chapter 2 (what he threw at the bug) is a tool called a *haboki*, which is used in tea ceremony.
That one was tied to a metal chopstick, also from tea ceremony.
It seems like a pain to carry around—even juvenile. There aren't many cleaning tools that take so much energy to use. Why not just whack everything with a vacuum cleaner...?



SCRUB
SCRUB
TODAY IS A HOLIDAY.
BUT I, FUMI NISHIOKA, AM CLEANING INDUSTRIOUSLY.
AFTER ALL, I'M A LIVE-IN HOUSEKEEPER AT THE HORIKITA MANSION!
I'M A PRETTY HARD WORKER, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF!
HOWEVER ...
RUB
RUB
FWAP
FWAP
HAP

...THE HORIKITAS ALL WORK THREE TIMES HARDER THAN I DO.
GOOD JOB, FUMI. DON'T OVERDO IT, NOW.
YOU'RE WORKING HARD, FUMI. THANK YOU.
HUP!
OH, UM... THANKS FOR SAYING THAT.
THEY ALWAYS OUTDO ME.
THE HORIKITAS ARE A FAMILY OF SWEEPERS.
MY BOSS, KYUTARO, IS ESPECIALLY STRICT...
...BUT HE'S ALSO REALLY GOOD.
BASICALLY, THEY MAINTAIN THE PLACE JUST FINE WITHOUT ME.
HE CLEANS EVERYTHING LIKE MAGIC.

AND HE DOES IT...
...WITH A GENTLE, LOVING TOUCH.
HE JUST CLEANED AROUND HERE! HE'S GONNA BE MAD!
O-OH, S-SORRY ...
I-I WASN'T LOOKING ...
ACK—!
KATHMP
AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT HURT.
BE CARE-FUL.
TNK

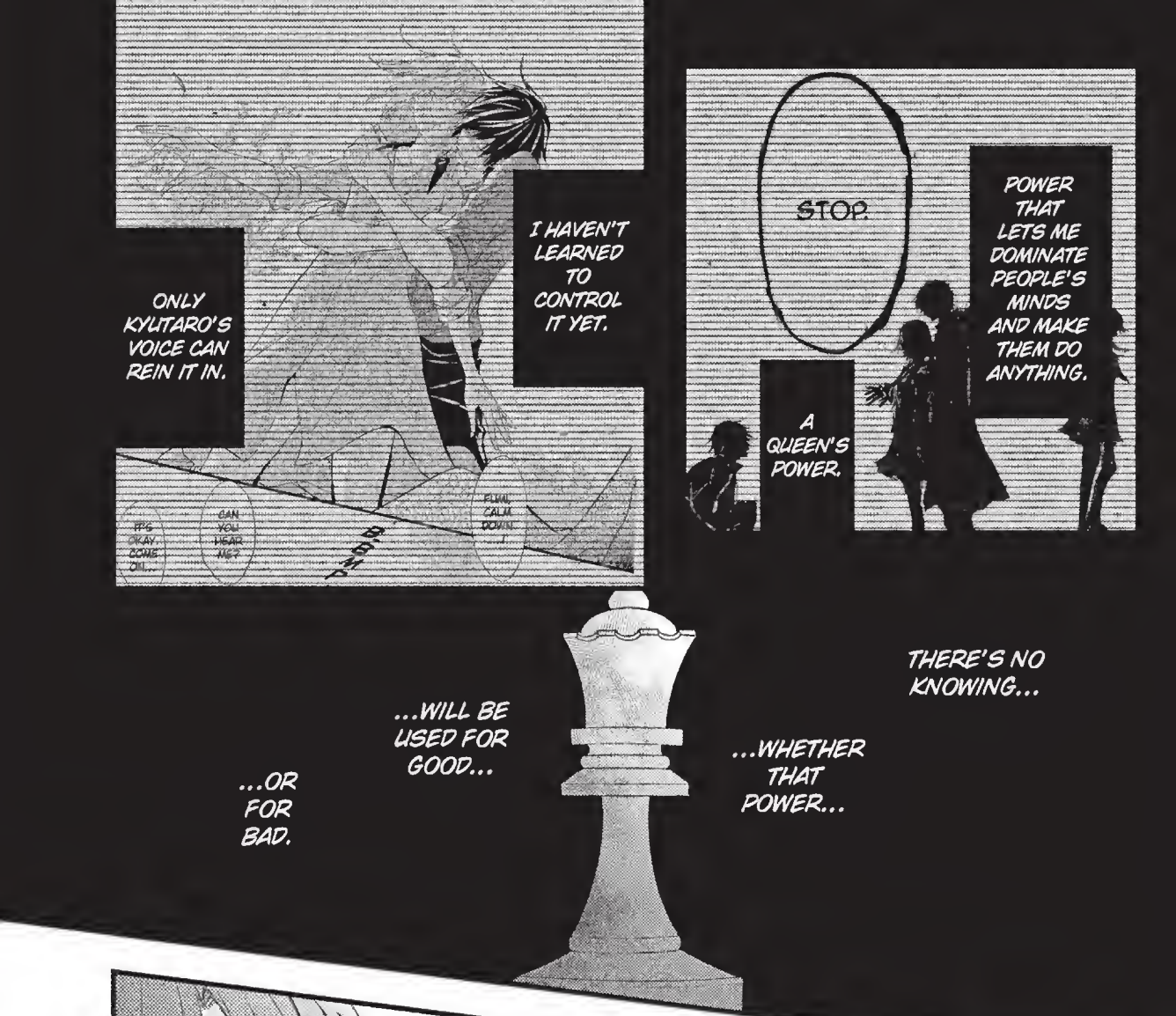
YOU LOOK A LITTLE PALE...
ARE YOU OKAY?
WHAT'S WRONG, KYUTARO?
YOU USUALLY GET MAD ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT.
HML
I'M FINE.
WHUP
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
YOU CAN FINISH UP HERE.
I'LL GO AIR OUT THE PARLOR.
KYUTARO ...

CHAK
IT FEELS LIKE HE'S AVOIDING ME.
"YOU MUST NEVER LET HER REMEMBER WHAT SHE'S FORGOTTEN ABOUT IN HER PAST."
"THE INSTANT SHE REGAINS HER MEMORY, THE BLACK QUEEN WILL BEGIN TO AWAKEN."
YOU'RE SURE YOU WANT TO STAY WITH HER...
...UNDER THOSE CONDI-TIONS?
...AND HOW MUCH YOU REALLY LOVE HER?
YOU MUST NEVER TELL HER.
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO HANDLE...
...NOT TELLING FUMI WHO SHE IS, OR WAS...

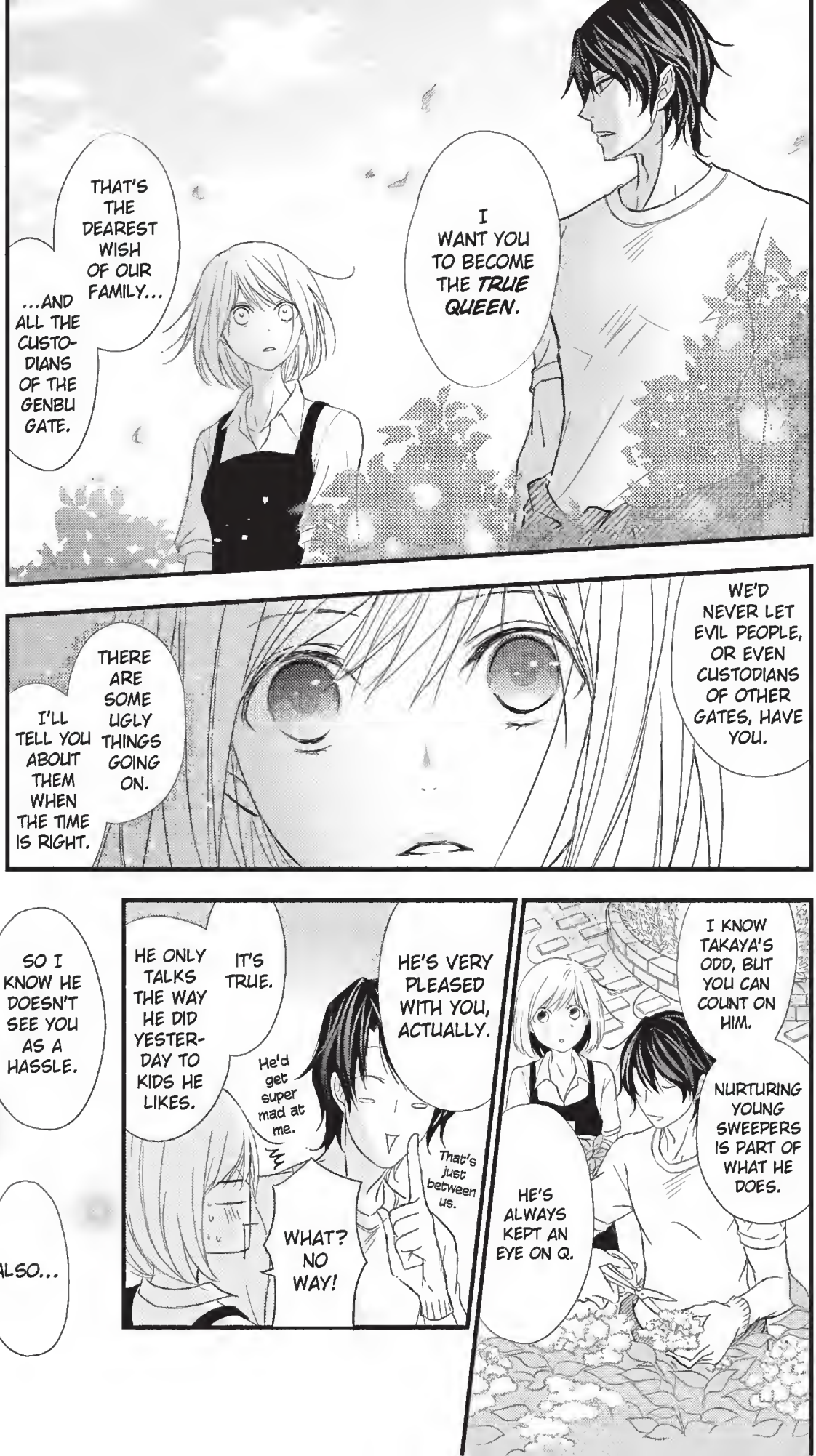
OF COURSE I'M SURE.
I'D DO ANYTHING FOR HER.
AND I ALREADY HAD A FEELING I SHOULDN'T ...
...TELL HER ABOUT HER PAST.
WHO CARES IF I CAN'T TELL HER I LOVE HER?
I'LL DO ANYTHING IF I CAN PROTECT HER.
I JUST WANT TO BE WITH HER.
I'LL...
...ALWAYS STAY WITH HER. ALWAYS.
THAT'S WORTH ANY SACRIFICE.
I SEE.

I HAD A FEELING THAT WOULD BE YOUR ANSWER.
IF THAT'S YOUR DECISION, THAN AS THE QUEEN'S CONSORT, YOU ABSOLUTELY MUSTN'T FAIL TO PROTECT HER.
BUT NOT BEING ABLE TO TELL HER EVERY-THING...
...WILL PROBABLY BE...
...FAR MORE DIFFICULT THAN YOU THINK.
FUMI!
There you are.
I'M ABOUT TO START MAKING LUNCH. WILL YOU HELP—
GLOOM
OH... HI, KOICHI ...
WHAT'S WRONG ?!
YOUR AURA'S SO GLOOMY.
You'll get bugs!!!

COULD YOU BE IMAGINING IT?
NOPE. LIVING THE WAY I HAVE HAS GIVEN ME STEADY NERVES AND A KNACK FOR READING PEOPLE'S EXPRESSIONS WITHOUT THEM NOTICING.
I KNOW HE'S BEING DISTANT.
SHUP
SHUP
SHUP
YOU THINK Q'S...
... AVOIDING YOU?
"I IMAGINE THERE'LL BE SOME TURMOIL. KEEP AN EYE ON HIM, KOICHI."
"I'VE TOLD KYUTARO WHAT HE'S FORBIDDEN TO DO.
I IMAGINE IT'S A BURDEN TO SUDDENLY ...
...BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ME.
BUT...
...I GUESS IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT HE'D AVOID ME.
THIS "QUEEN" THING IS SUCH A PAIN.
THEY SAY I HAVE A SPECIAL POWER INSIDE ME.


ONLY KYUTARO'S VOICE CAN REIN IT IN.
I HAVEN'T LEARNED TO CONTROL IT YET.
IT'S OKAY. COME OUT.
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
PLEASE, CALM DOWN!
STOP.
A QUEEN'S POWER.
POWER THAT LETS ME DOMINATE PEOPLE'S MINDS AND MAKE THEM DO ANYTHING.
...OR FOR BAD.
...WILL BE USED FOR GOOD...
...WHETHER THAT POWER...
THERE'S NO KNOWING...

THAT ISN'T TRUE.
LET ME BE PERFECTLY CLEAR.
YOU, KYUTARO, GRANNY...
AND I'M SURE IT'S A HASSLE FOR DR. KITAHARA TO HAVE TO TRAIN ME...
I'M SORRY YOU'VE ALL GOTTEN INVOLVED IN THIS.
I FEEL READY TO TAKE IT ON, THOUGH.


I WANT YOU TO BECOME THE TRUE QUEEN.
THAT'S THE DEAREST WISH OF OUR FAMILY...
...AND ALL THE CUSTO-DIANS OF THE GENBU GATE.
WE'D NEVER LET EVIL PEOPLE, OR EVEN CUSTODIANS OF OTHER GATES, HAVE YOU.
THERE ARE SOME UGLY THINGS GOING ON.
I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT THEM WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT.
I KNOW TAKAYA'S ODD, BUT YOU CAN COUNT ON HIM.
NURTURING YOUNG SWEEPERS IS PART OF WHAT HE DOES.
HE'S ALWAYS KEPT AN EYE ON Q.
HE'S VERY PLEASED WITH YOU, ACTUALLY.
That's just between us.
IT'S TRUE.
HE ONLY TALKS THE WAY HE DID YESTER-DAY TO KIDS HE LIKES.
He'd get super mad at me.
WHAT? NO WAY!
SO I KNOW HE DOESN'T SEE YOU AS A HASSLE.
ALSO...

YOU'RE BOTH YOUNG. YOU HAVE GROWING TO DO.
JUST LIKE KYUTARO'S SPECIAL TO YOU...
...YOU'RE SPECIAL TO HIM.
...KEEP THIS IN MIND, OKAY?

...GRADUALLY, AS YOU MATURE.
...AND COME TO REALLY KNOW EACH OTHER...
MY HOPE IS THAT TOGETHER, YOU'LL OVERCOME WHATEVER ORDEALS FACE YOU...

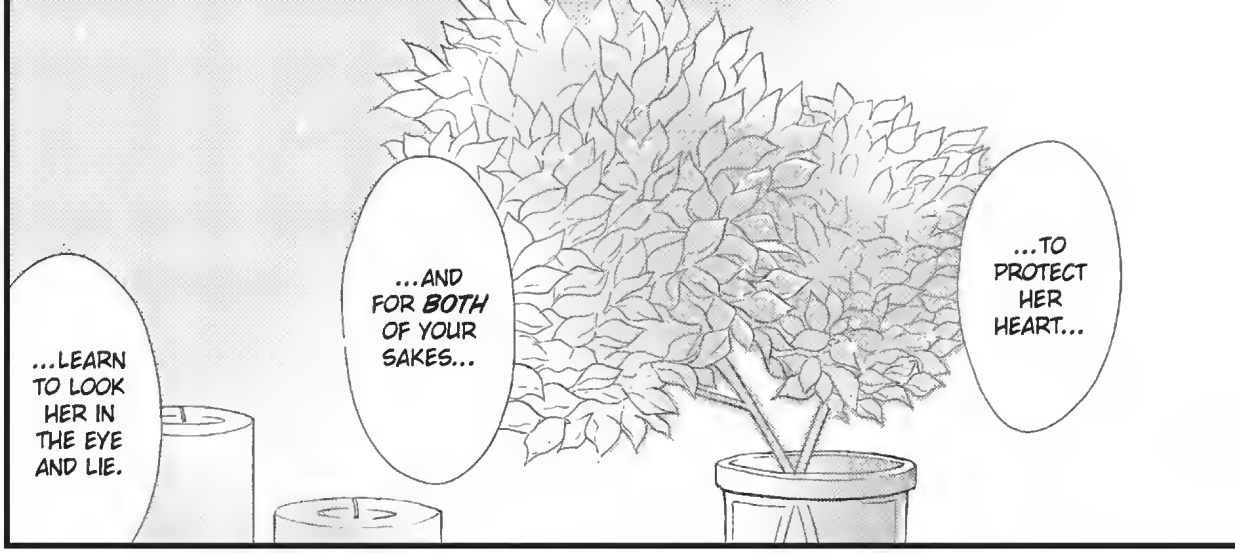
WHEN KOICHI TOLD ME THAT, I COULDN'T IMAGINE WHAT WE MIGHT HAVE TO FACE...
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF ORDEALS WE'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH?
"ORDEALS"...

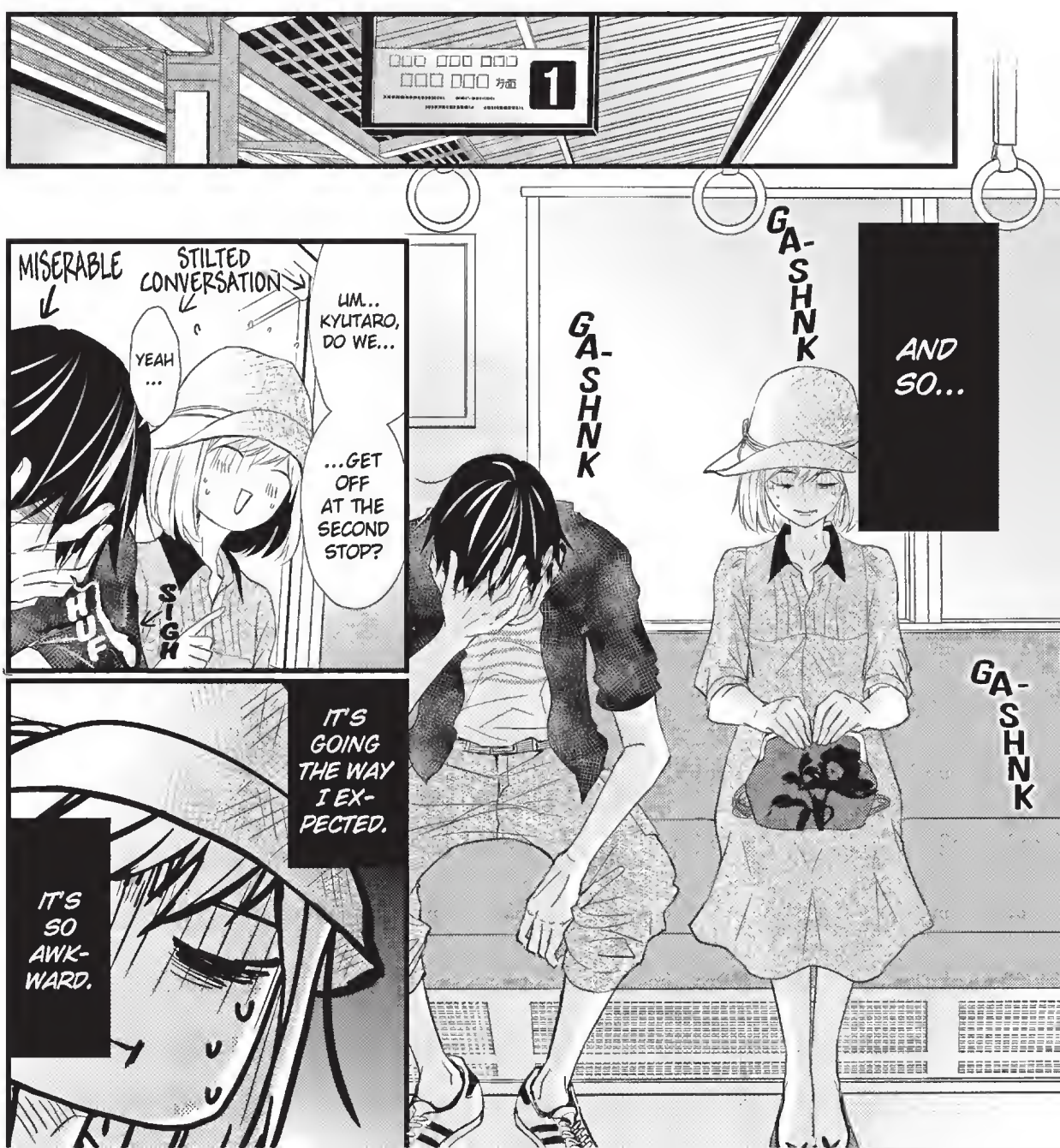
Orders
Kyutaro & Fumi
Go shopping together.
<Shopping List>
・Mosquito repellant
・Summer dress for Fumi (Something cute and fancy)
...BUT THE FIRST ORDEAL HAPPENED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.
YOU WANT US TO WHAT?!
WHAT'S UNCLEAR ABOUT THIS?
YOU TWO ARE GOING SOMEPLACE TOGETHER.
IT'S TRAINING. YOU CAN'T REFUSE.
TRAIN-ING? WHY ...?
HOW NICE! YOU'RE GOING OUT.
FUMI, GO AND GET READY.
A-AS SOON AS I FINISH THE DISHES ...
CLATTER CLATTER

I GUESS...
...THIS REALLY MIGHT COUNT AS AN ORDEAL.
No joke.
OUT OF SORTS.
NONCOMPOOP
NOT USED TO SHOPPING.
NOT GETTING ALONG WELL.
Bah...
Sigh...
MUTTER
MUTTER
SALE
FANCY TOPS
I WONDER WHAT IT'LL BE LIKE...
And we're buying me a dress?
SHOP-PING—?! WITH KYUTARO ...?
CLATTER
CLATTER

WHY DO I HAVE TO GO?
CAN'T SHE ORDER SOMETHING ONLINE?
THAT'S WHAT I ALWAYS DO.
LISTEN UP, KYUTARO.
NO MATTER WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR HEAD, YOUR ATTITUDE TODAY WAS INEXCUS-ABLE.
A GUY WHO TREATS A GIRL SO INCONSIS-TENTLY IS SCUM.
HOW DO YOU THINK FUMI FELT?
FLINCH
YOU SAID YOU'D BE SATISFIED JUST BEING WITH HER.
BIG TALK. WAS IT TRUE?

I'M SORRY...
I WAS THINKING, AND...
...I GOT SCARED SHE'D SEE THROUGH ME.
W-WAIT, THAT'S... I...
I KNOW YOU'RE IN A TOUGH POSITION, Q.
BUT WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE THAT, TRY SAYING SOMETHING SINCERE.
IT'S LIKE CLEANING. DOING THINGS FOR OTHERS CAN HELP YOU WORK OUT YOUR OWN ISSUES.
YOU HAVE TROUBLE COMMUNI-CATING, BUT...
...YOU CAN'T USE THAT AS AN EXCUSE TO TREAT PEOPLE BADLY.
YOU AND FUMI ARE IRREPLACE-ABLE TO EACH OTHER.
FOR HER SAKE, YOU HAVE TO GROW UP.
USE ALL THE WORDS YOU CAN TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.
AND THEN...


...TO PROTECT HER HEART...
...AND FOR BOTH OF YOUR SAKES...
...LEARN TO LOOK HER IN THE EYE AND LIE.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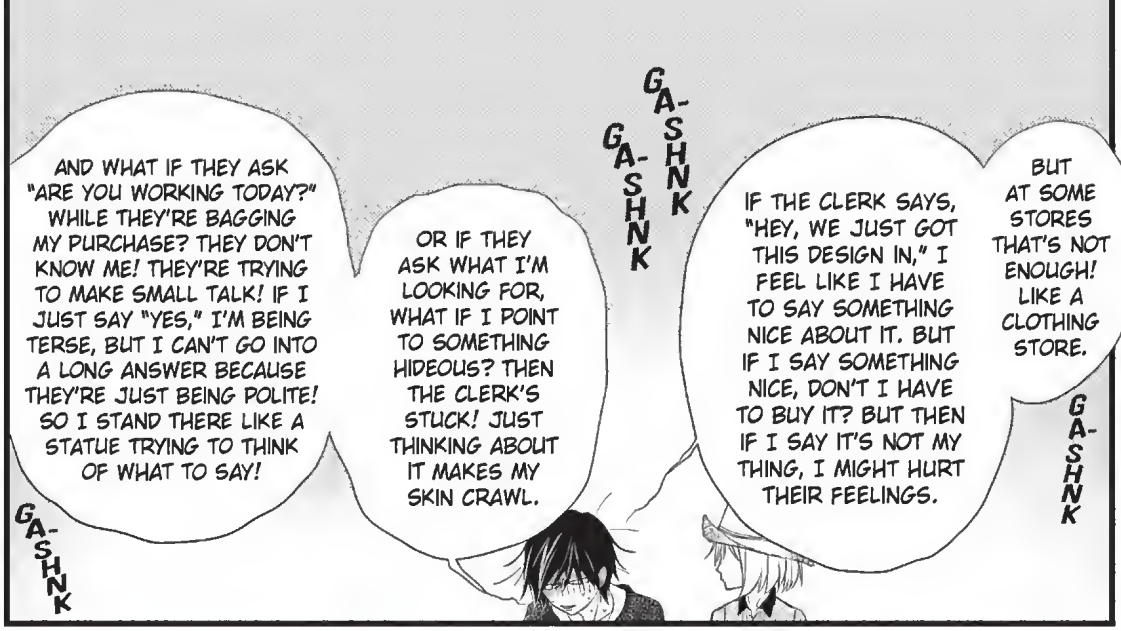
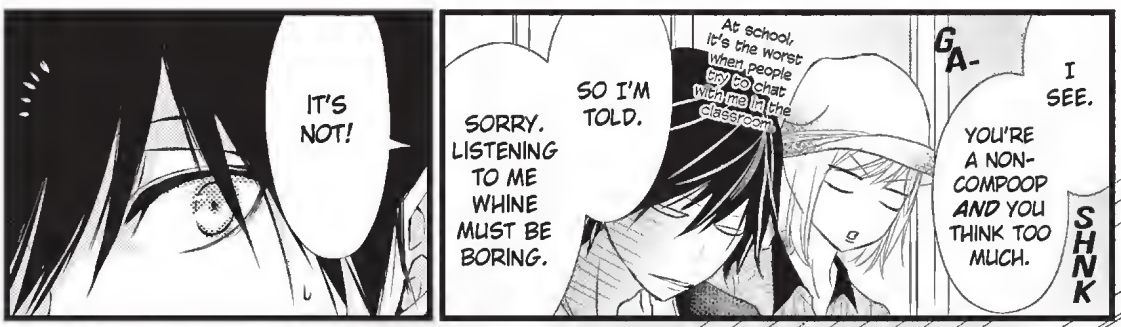
AND SO...
GA-SHNK
GA-SHNK
GA-SHNK
MISERABLE
STILTED CONVERSATION
UM... KYUTARO, DO WE...
...GET OFF AT THE SECOND STOP?
YEAH...
HUF
SIGH
IT'S GOING THE WAY I EX-PECTED.
IT'S SO AWK-WARD.

I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THIS!
I KNOW THIS ISN'T FUN FOR YOU.
IT'S...
I'LL TRY TO COMPLETE OUR ASSIGNMENT AS FAST AS POSSIBLE!
SO HANG IN THERE.
SQUEEZE
YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG.
MUTTER
IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE YOU.
GA-SHNK
I DON'T LIKE SHOP-PING.
SQUEEZE
IT...KINDA SCARES ME.
GA-SHNK
IT'S LIKE YOU SAID! I'M A NONCOMPOOP. IT'S PRETTY DIRE.
I GET QUEASY JUST THINKING ABOUT TALKING TO A SALESCLERK. IT'S A HUNDRED TIMES WORSE THAN A HAUNTED HOUSE.
YES, I KNOW!
I-IT IS...? REALLY?
BUT WHEN YOU'RE WORKING, YOU TALK PRETTY NORMALLY TO PEOPLE.
WORK'S FINE. THERE'S A CLEAR REASON FOR SPEAKING.
BUT YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE TALKING TO A CLERK.
BUT EVERYDAY SMALL TALK FREAKS ME OUT.
It's just: "I want this. Please sell it to me."


BUT AT SOME STORES THAT'S NOT ENOUGH! LIKE A CLOTHING STORE.
GA-SHNK
IF THE CLERK SAYS, "HEY, WE JUST GOT THIS DESIGN IN," I FEEL LIKE I HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING NICE ABOUT IT. BUT IF I SAY SOMETHING NICE, DON'T I HAVE TO BUY IT? BUT THEN IF I SAY IT'S NOT MY THING, I MIGHT HURT THEIR FEELINGS.
GA-SHNK
OR IF THEY ASK WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR, WHAT IF I POINT TO SOMETHING HIDEOUS? THEN THE CLERK'S STUCK! JUST THINKING ABOUT IT MAKES MY SKIN CRAWL.
GA-SHNK
AND WHAT IF THEY ASK "ARE YOU WORKING TODAY?" WHILE THEY'RE BAGGING MY PURCHASE? THEY DON'T KNOW ME! THEY'RE TRYING TO MAKE SMALL TALK! IF I JUST SAY "YES," I'M BEING TERSE, BUT I CAN'T GO INTO A LONG ANSWER BECAUSE THEY'RE JUST BEING POLITE! SO I STAND THERE LIKE A STATUE TRYING TO THINK OF WHAT TO SAY!
GA-SHNK


I SEE.
GA-
YOU'RE A NON-COMPOOP AND YOU THINK TOO MUCH.
SHNK
At school, it's the worst when people try to chat with me in the classroom.
SO I'M TOLD.
SORRY. LISTENING TO ME WHINE MUST BE BORING.
IT'S NOT!

I'M GLAD...
I'M REALLY HAPPY.
...THAT YOU'RE OPENING UP ABOUT YOURSELF.
SURE, IT'S SMALL TALK, BUT...
...YOU DON'T HATE TALKING TO ME, RIGHT?
HE'S LOOKING RIGHT AT ME.
THAT'S ALL IT TAKES.
AND THAT MAKES ME HAPPY.

NO, I DON'T HATE IT.
I'VE ALWAYS ENJOYED...
...TALKING TO YOU.
I'M SORRY FOR RUINING YOUR MOOD THIS MORNING.
TAKAYA CHEWED ME OUT YESTERDAY, SO I WAS FEELING DOWN.
GA-SHNK
GA-SHNK
IT WASN'T ANYTHING MAJOR, THOUGH, SO DON'T WORRY.
OH, IT'S FINE. HEH HEH...
HEH HEH HEH
IT'S A LITTLE EMBARRASSING HAVING YOU SAY THAT.
YEAH, BUT...
IS THAT WHY?
You were looking out for me...?
SORRY. AFTER EVERY-THING THAT'S HAP-PENED...
I'LL DO BETTER. AND I'LL TALK TO YOU.
I DIDN'T WANT YOU GETTING TREATED LIKE A WEIRDO FOR BEING WITH ME.
AND SORRY I IGNORED YOU AT SCHOOL.

GA-SHNK
I REALLY AM SORRY.
I'LL NEVER DO ANYTHING...
...TO MAKE YOU SAD AGAIN.

MOORS
THIS MALL'S HUGE!
SPARKLE
IT'S BEAUTIFUL! AND SO MANY STORES!
WELL, IT'S BRAND NEW...
AMAZING! IT'S LIKE A DREAM!
WHERE SHOULD WE START?
OH, WHAT ABOUT THAT STORE?
SHOULD BE FINE.
I SOMETIMES BUY THINGS THERE.
Online.
OKAY, BOSS!

I'LL RUN IN AND BUY A DRESS.
WHY DON'T YOU WAIT FOR ME OUT HERE?
HUH?
W-WHY?
STUNNED
YOU DON'T LIKE CLOTHING STORES, RIGHT?
And it's clothes for me, so...
YOU CAN GO BUY SOME MOSQUITO REPELLANT WHILE I'M IN THERE.
You just have to hand it to the cashier.
EVERYONE HAS THINGS THEY'RE GOOD AT OR NOT GOOD AT.
THIS IS TEAMWORK!
YOU'RE WONDERFUL, AND YOU'RE GOOD AT SO MANY THINGS.
YOU'RE ALWAYS HELPING ME OUT, SO...
...WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE THIS TO ME?

"YOU AND FUMI ARE IRREPLACEABLE TO EACH OTHER.

"FOR HER SAKE, YOU HAVE TO GROW UP."

STOP
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
OH NO, YOU DON'T!
WHAT'S WRONG ...?
THAT THING'S WEIRD! YOU'RE TERRIBLE AT SHOPPING TOO!
YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY JUST TO BUY MEN'S LOUNGING PANTS?
WHY NOT? THEY'RE CHEAP.
Koichi has a pair kinda like this...
SALE
MEN'S LOUNGING PANTS
¥780
CHEAP DOESN'T MEAN GOOD!
AND AREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BUY SOMETHING FANCY?
WELL, I THINK THEY LOOK FANCY...
SMOOSH
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
"FANCY" MEANS CLOTHES NORMAL PEOPLE WEAR WHEN THEY GO OUT. THESE ARE NOT THAT!
SOME PEOPLE CAN MAKE THEM LOOK CLASSY, BUT THAT'S NOT YOU.
ANYWAY, YOU NEED MORE CLOTHES.
I've thought that for a while.
YOU'RE ALWAYS WEARING THAT.
Or your uniform or gym clothes or pajamas...
W-WELL, YES, BUT...
SHOCK
I'VE GOT THREE PAIRS OF PANTIES!
One each for today, tomorrow and special occasions.
DON'T LOOK SO TRIUMPHANT! THAT'S TOO FEW.
What "special occasions"?
ANYWAY...
A...

I-I GUESS I'LL GO SHOPPING WITH YOU.
HUH?
I CAN'T LEAVE IT UP TO YOU.
CLASP
YOU DON'T HAVE TO FORCE YOURSELF!
I CAN FEEL YOU SHAKING! YOU'RE SCARED, AREN'T YOU?
SQUEEZE
TREMBLE TREMBLE
SURE, I'M SCARED. SO WHAT?
I'M MORE SCARED OF THE DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN IF YOU PICK THE CLOTHES.
TREMBLE TREMBLE
BE-SIDES...
I WANT TO...
...HELP YOU.
WE'RE GOING TO BE TOGETHER FROM NOW ON.

FLINCH
ARE YOU TWO SHOPPING TOGETHER?
AH...
OH!
Y-YES. SORRY, UH...
BLUNT
UM... NEITHER OF US IS GOOD AT THIS, BUT MAYBE BETWEEN US WE CAN PICK SOMETHING. WE'D APPRECIATE YOUR HELP.
YES! WE'LL DISCUSS THINGS BEFORE WE DECIDE.
OF COURSE. WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
FANCY... ELEGANT... TIDY...
F-FOR... SUMMER.
GAPE
A... SET...
SOMETHING THAT LOOKS PUT TOGETHER, ON THE FANCY OR ELEGANT SIDE.
A DRESS OR A TWO-PIECE OUTFIT FOR SUMMER.
I SEE. THIS IS VERY POPULAR...
DID I TRANSLATE THAT RIGHT?
NOD NOD
You're sweating.
THANK YOU.
DON'T WORRY, KYUTARO! I'M HERE FOR YOU.
WE'RE A LITTLE SHOOK UP, BUT WE'LL HELP EACH OTHER THROUGH ALL OUR TRIALS!
RIGHT!

IT TURNED OUT THAT KYUTARO AND I...

...WORKED EVEN BETTER AS A TEAM SHOPPING FOR NEW CLOTHES...

...THAN WHEN WE WERE FIGHTING BUGS ON THE INSIDE.

SWISH
AND THEN...
KYUTARO ...!
WHAT DO YOU THINK ?
OH, HOW PRETTY!
IT LOOKS LOVELY ON YOU.
YOU THINK SO? HEH...
TWITCH
IT'S GREAT, ISN'T IT?
YOU WORKED SO HARD TO FIND JUST THE RIGHT OUTFIT.
UH, NO, I, UH...
NOT... REALLY...

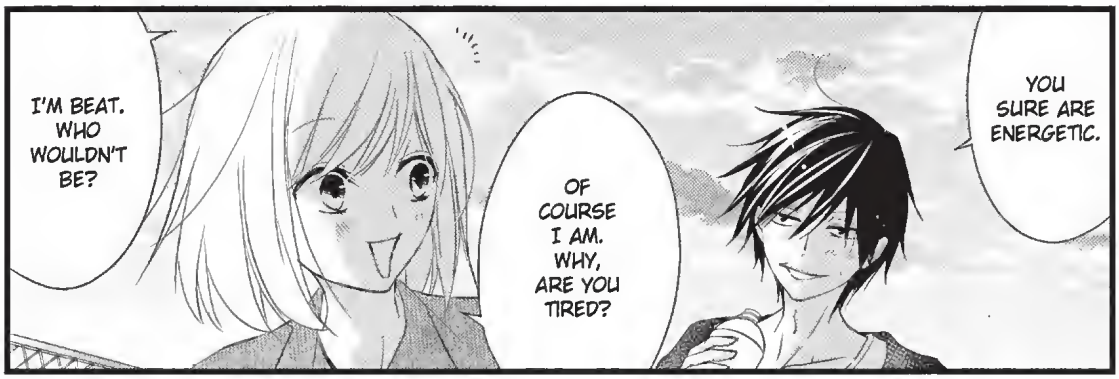
I AM GLAD, THOUGH.
THE OUTFIT LOOKS REALLY GOOD ON YOU.
REALLY CUTE.
IT'S WONDER-FUL.

AT THAT MOMENT...

...I FELT LIKE WE MIGHT HAVE PASSED...

...ONE OF OUR TESTS.

HM... HM HM... DE DUM...
HM... HUM DE DUM DE DUM...


I'M BEAT. WHO WOULDN'T BE?
OF COURSE I AM. WHY, ARE YOU TIRED?
YOU SURE ARE ENERGETIC.

"WE'RE GOING TO BE...
SO MANY THINGS TO BE HAPPY ABOUT...!
I HAVE BRAND-NEW CLOTHES...
BUT TODAY WAS SUCH A WONDERFUL, MARVELOUS DAY!
AND YOU CHOSE THEM FOR ME!
"...TOGETHER FROM NOW ON."

KYUTARO, KYUTARO ...!
HE'S GOING TO STAY WITH ME.
HE SAID HE'LL STAY WITH ME.
LOOK AT MY SKIRT!
THAT'S ALL IT TOOK.
LOOK AT HOW IT FLARES OUT...
...WHEN I SPIN AROUND!

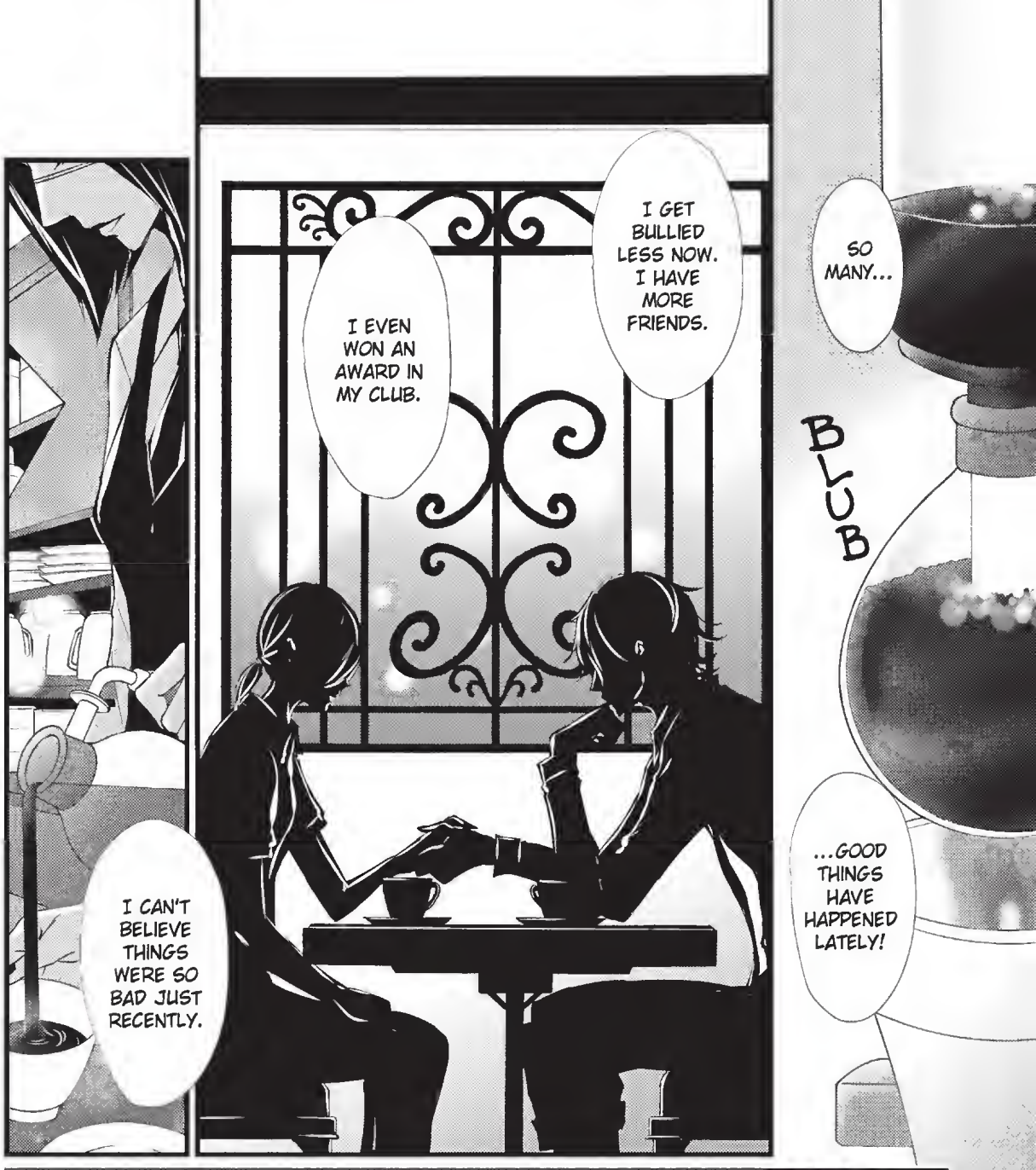
"WHO CARES IF I CAN'T TELL HER I LOVE HER?"

"IT WILL PROBABLY BE FAR MORE DIFFICULT THAN YOU THINK."

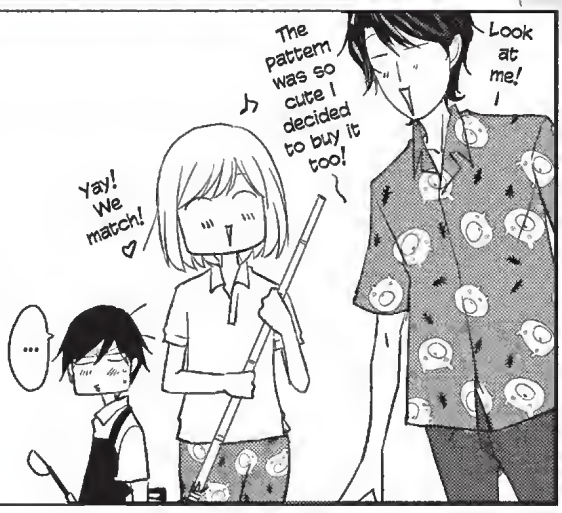
DID YOU HURT YOUR-SELF?
WHAT'S WRONG, KYUTARO?
THE LIE...

...THAT HE TOLD...
I'M FINE.
JUST SOME DUST IN MY EYE.
LET'S HURRY HOME.
...DIDN'T REGISTER WITH ME.
I WAS DISTRACTED BY HIS FIRM GRIP...
...ON MY HAND.
OH NO!
MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO ON AHEAD?
NO. LET'S GO TOGETHER.
I WON'T LET YOU GO.

Chapter
4



Lounging pants are great!
For someone like a manga artist, who spends so much time indoors, there's nothing more comfortable.
And isn't that bear design adorable?
My super-competent assistant created it! I love it, so I decided to showcase it in this story.



THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING.
YOU CHANGED MY LIFE, ATARU.

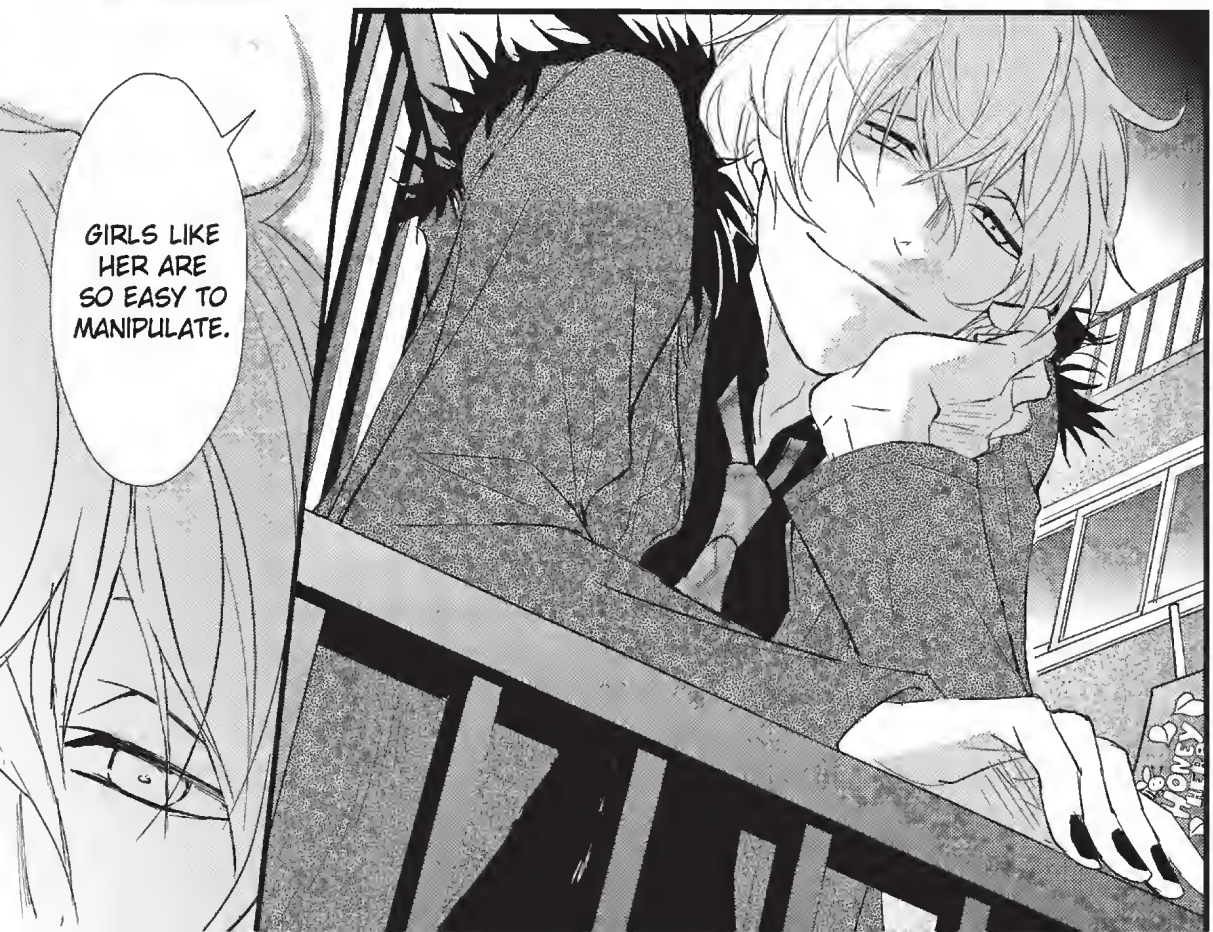
AT FIRST I THOUGHT AURA READING HAD TO BE A SCAM...
...BUT YOU SAW MY PROB-LEMS...
...AND YOU GAVE ME ADVICE.

YOU NEVER LAUGHED AT ME.
YOU *LIS-TENED.*
I'M SO...
THAT'S WONDER-FUL, MIKI.
YOUR AURA IS A BRILLIANT GREEN. YOU'LL NEVER BE BEATEN DOWN. YOU'RE VERY BRAVE.
IT REFLECTS YOUR INNATE STRENGTH. NEVER FORGET THAT.

AND REMEMBER...
...WHAT I TOLD YOU.
TWITCH
THIS HAIR CLIP IS LUCKY...
CLICK
...FOR YOU.
SHOW YOUR FACE.
SMILE.
SMILING DRAWS MORE HAPPINESS TO YOU.
DON'T WORRY, YOU LOOK CUTE.
TRUST ME.
I'D NEVER LIE TO YOU.

AH... OH!
BUMP
I-I'M SORRY.
HEH...
GRIN

HONEY


GIRLS LIKE HER ARE SO EASY TO MANIPULATE.
HONEY

TMP...
PURE-HEARTED, STUPID GIRLS...
...WITH WEAK MINDS AND NO SELF-CONFIDENCE.
AND SHE COMPLETELY ADORES YOU.
WITH SOMEONE SO WISHY-WASHY, YOU JUST NEED TO PLANT SOME MALICE AS BAIT...
...AND YOUR BUGS WILL MAKE A SLAVE OF HER.
SO WHY AREN'T YOU USING HER, ATARU?
IF YOU DON'T MAKE FULL USE OF YOUR BUG HANDLER TRICKS, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO EXTEND YOUR LIFE.
DO YOU ONLY WANT PRETTY SLAVES?
I MEAN, SHE DOES HAVE THAT UNFORTU-NATE—
HEY, SIS. STOP THAT.
YOU'RE MAKING ME MAD.

SHE'S A GOOD GIRL, OKAY?
SHE'S AWKWARD AND IN A BAD ENVIRONMENT, AND...
...SHE'S JUST AN ORDINARY, PLEASANT GIRL.
SHE DOESN'T TRY TO HURT ANYONE...
...OR BLAME OTHER PEOPLE FOR HER PROBLEMS.
I WON'T USE GIRLS LIKE HER.
I FORGOT ABOUT THAT. SORRY.
I'LL LOSE MY MOTIVATION. SO STOP IT, WILL YOU?
I DON'T NEED TO CHOOSE GIRLS LIKE HER.
THERE'S PLENTY OF TRASH OUT THERE.

THE WORLD'S FULL OF PEOPLE WHO COULD BE DEVOURED BY BUGS WITHOUT ANYONE MISSING THEM.
THEY SHOULD BE WIPED OUT.
GARBAGE HUMANS WHO CONTRIBUTE NOTHING TO THIS WORLD.
THE WORLD WOULD BE KINDER AND LOVELIER WITHOUT THEM.

CRUNCH
I WANT THE WORLD TO BE LIKE THAT...
...SOON.
THAT'S WHY WE NEED THE QUEEN...
...AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

DON'T WORRY, SIS.
ATARU...
I'VE ALREADY PREPARED THE BUG...
...THAT WILL ACTIVATE THE QUEEN.
A MUCH BIGGER ONE.

BANG
WHAM

DON'T DROP YOUR GUARD AFTER A BIG MOVE.
GOT YOU! TOO BAD!
THUP
TWS
HUF
YIKES...
THUMP
THREE MORE!
BANG

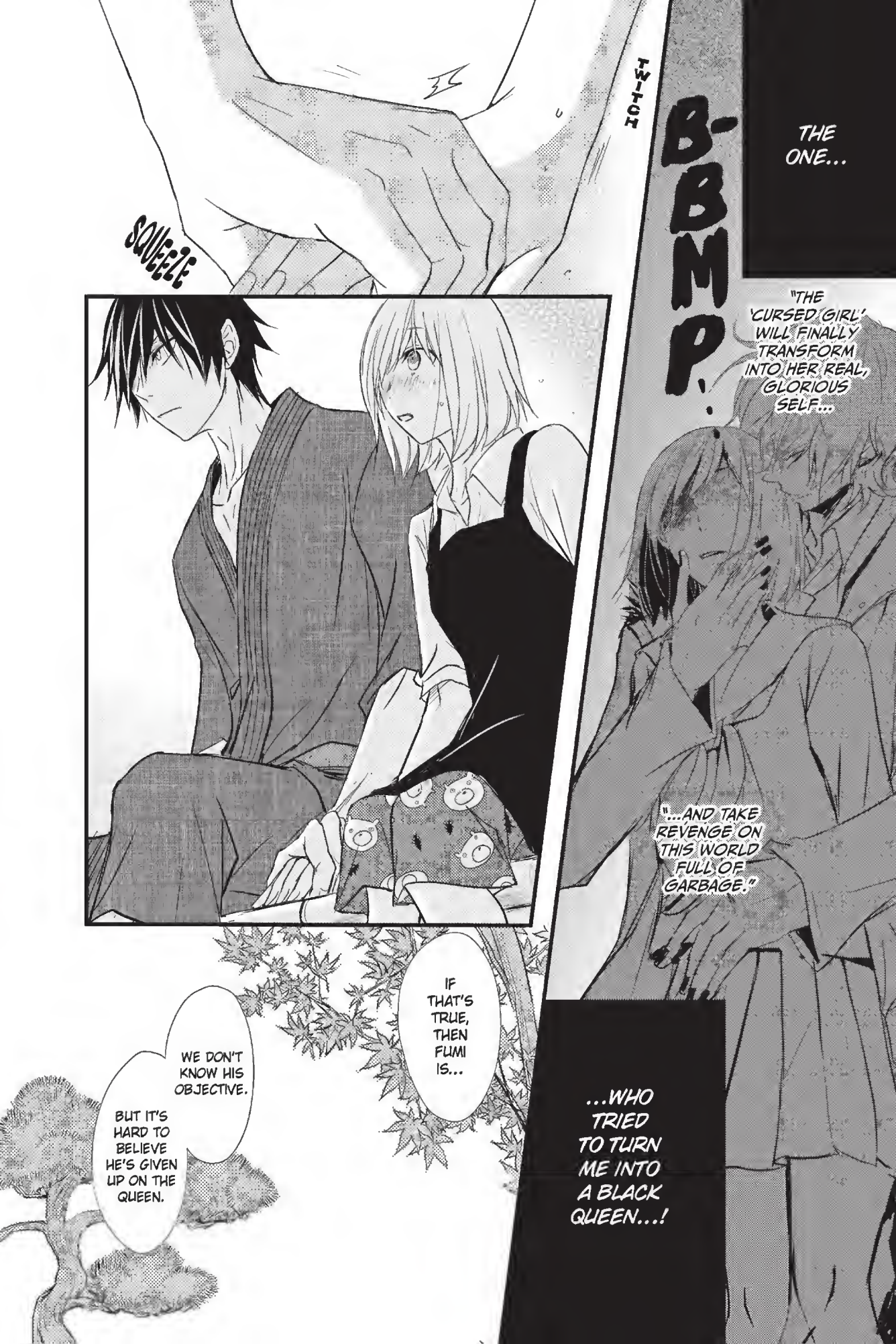
THUP
Koichi's good too.
KYUTARO'S GOOD.
THWUMP
THAT NON-COMPOOP SEEMS DELICATE, BUT HE GIVES AS GOOD AS HE GETS.
TAKE THAT!
THIS HARSH TRAINING STARTS EARLY IN THE MORNING.
EVEN SWEEPERS REQUIRE LOTS OF PRACTICE.
SWISH SWISH
I KNOW CLEANING'S IMPORTANT, BUT...
I WOULDN'T MIND HAVING TRAINING LIKE THAT.
CHIRP...
WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT ALL?
CLEANING FROM THE CRACK OF DAWN...
...MOSTLY FEEL TIRED AND SLEEPY.
HON-ESTLY, I...
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, YOU INSOLENT FOOL?
OUT-RAGEOUS! YOU NEED MORE TRAINING.

I TOLD YOU, I CAN READ PEOPLE BY SMELL.
AND YOU SMELL LIKE A SLACKER.
DON'T BE SURPRISED THAT I READ YOUR MIND.
TAKAYA, WHEN DID YOU—
EEEK!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS THINKING!
FWOOSH
THAT'S WHY YOU CLEAN. DOING A MERELY ADEQUATE JOB DOESN'T QUALIFY AS TRAINING.
Sounds hard.
...AND LEARN HOW TO TAKE THE "MIDDLE PATH" IN YOUR MIND AND YOUR ENVIRON-MENT.
IT TAKES DISCIPLINE TO CONTROL YOUR LAZY IMPULSES...
OH, BY SMELL. HA HA ...
WOMEN HAVE IT ROUGH. IS YOURS USUALLY BAD?
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?!
WHAT?!
SHOCK
AND IT'S THAT TIME OF THE MONTH, ISN'T IT?
THAT MAKES SOME PEOPLE EMOTIONALLY FRAGILE, SO BE CAREFUL.

HOW REFRESHING TO START THE DAY WITH WATERMELON.
TAKAYA BROUGHT THIS FOR US.
WATERMELON IS HEALTHY! IT'S GOOD FOR PREVENTING SUMMER FATIGUE.
THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME CUT IT UP.
HA HA HA! I DIDN'T THINK I'D BE BLEEDING TODAY.
MUNCH MUNCH
Sen-dai's sworn she'll do it.
YOU'LL WIND UP BURIED IN OUR YARD SOMEDAY.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE SO EARLY?
YES.
SOME-THING URGENT ?
I GOT A REPORT LAST NIGHT.
WELL?

IT SEEMS THAT A BUG HANDLER IS ON THE MOVE.

A BUG HANDLER ...
B-BMP
BEFORE THEIR DEATHS, THESE VICTIMS SHOWED SIGNS OF BEING MANIPULATED.
CHANCES ARE A BUG HANDLER'S BEHIND THIS.
THERE WERE SEVERAL SUDDEN DEATHS DUE TO INFESTATION IN THE SURROUNDING AREA.
NO SWEEPERS NOTICED THE VICTIMS BEFORE THE SYMPTOMS APPEARED, THOUGH.

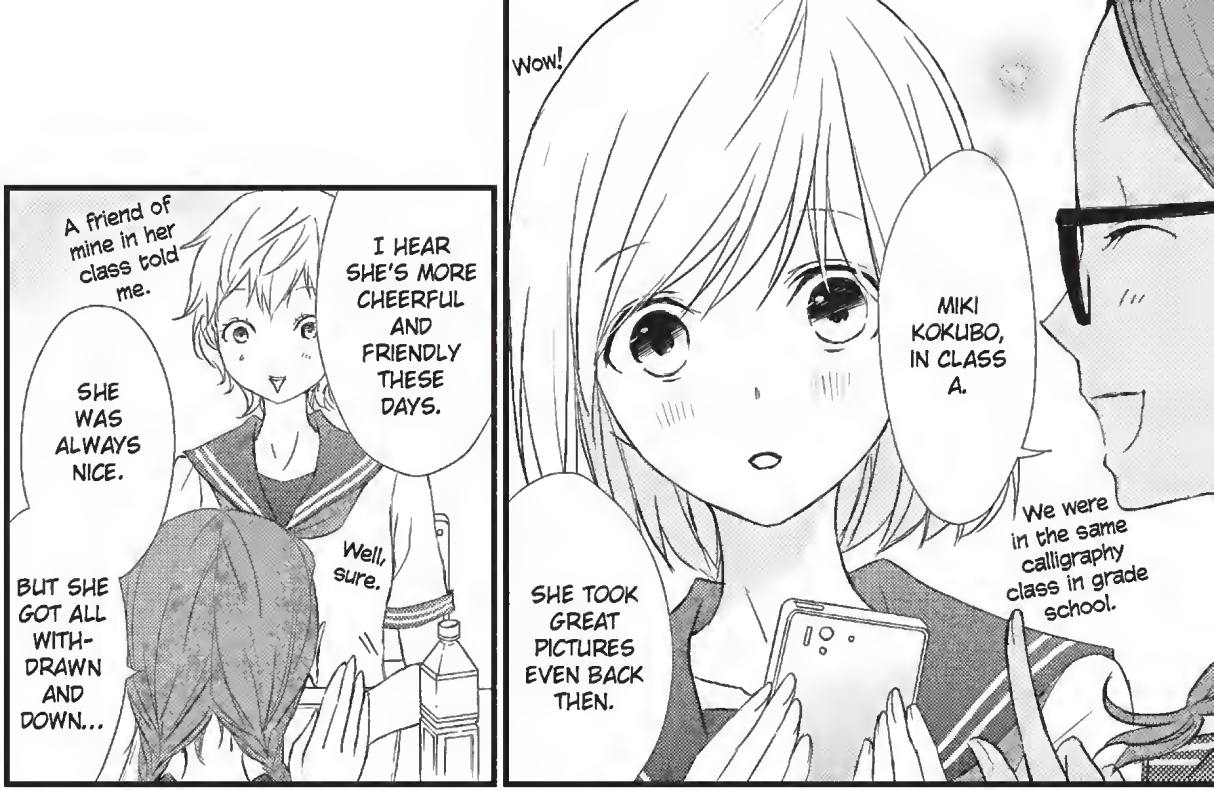

SQUEEZE
TWITCH
B-BMP.
THE ONE...
"THE 'CURSED GIRL' WILL FINALLY TRANSFORM INTO HER REAL, GLORIOUS SELF...
"...AND TAKE REVENGE ON THIS WORLD FULL OF GARBAGE."
...WHO TRIED TO TURN ME INTO A BLACK QUEEN...!
IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN FUMI IS...
WE DON'T KNOW HIS OBJECTIVE.
BUT IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE HE'S GIVEN UP ON THE QUEEN.

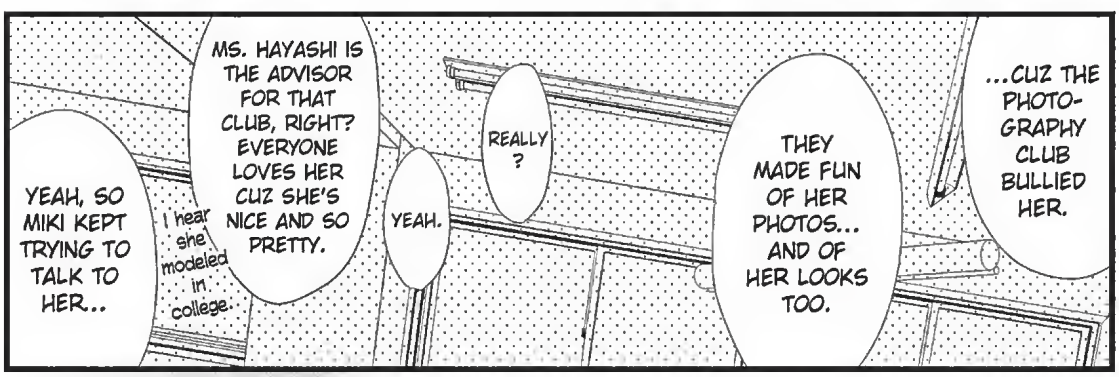
KIDS...
BE ON YOUR GUARD.
IF THE BUG HANDLER MAKES A MOVE ON YOU...
...TAKE ACTION.
IF HE WANTS A FIGHT, TAKE HIM ON.
NO BUG HANDLER SHOULD TREAT ANY SWEEPER OF THE GENBU KITA CLAN WITH DISRESPECT.
TAKAYA ...
RUNNING FROM HIM WON'T ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.
WE'RE NOT IN A POSITION TO WAIT FOR THEM TO FINISH GROWING INTO THEIR ABILITIES.
IF FUMI HAS THE QUALITIES OF THE TRUE QUEEN...
...THEN SHE MIGHT SEE AND LEARN THE MOST SURROUNDED BY CARNAGE...
...WHERE EVERYTHING IS AT STAKE.

THE SAME GOES FOR YOU...
...THE QUEEN'S CONSORT-TO-BE...
...KYU-TARO.

IN BATTLE, STUDY YOUR ENEMY.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, STUDY YOURSELF.
THERE'S NOTHING AS INCOMPREHENSIBLE AS YOUR OWN INNER SELF...
...AND NOTHING AS PERILOUS.

"IF THE BUG HANDLER MAKES A MOVE ON YOU, TAKE ACTION."
...
CHATTER
OH, HERE IT IS.
THIS IS THE PHOTO THAT WON THE SPECIAL AWARD.
Let me see.
WOW! WHAT A GREAT EYE.
HEY, THE PUBLIC VOTED ON THIS!
YEAH. ISN'T THAT AMAZING?
CRITIQUE
DO YOU KNOW WHO TOOK IT?
UH-HUH!
It's beautiful.


Wow!
MIKI KOKUBO, IN CLASS A.
We were in the same calligraphy class in grade school.
SHE TOOK GREAT PICTURES EVEN BACK THEN.
I HEAR SHE'S MORE CHEERFUL AND FRIENDLY THESE DAYS.
A friend of mine in her class told me.
SHE WAS ALWAYS NICE.
Well, sure.
BUT SHE GOT ALL WITH-DRAWN AND DOWN...

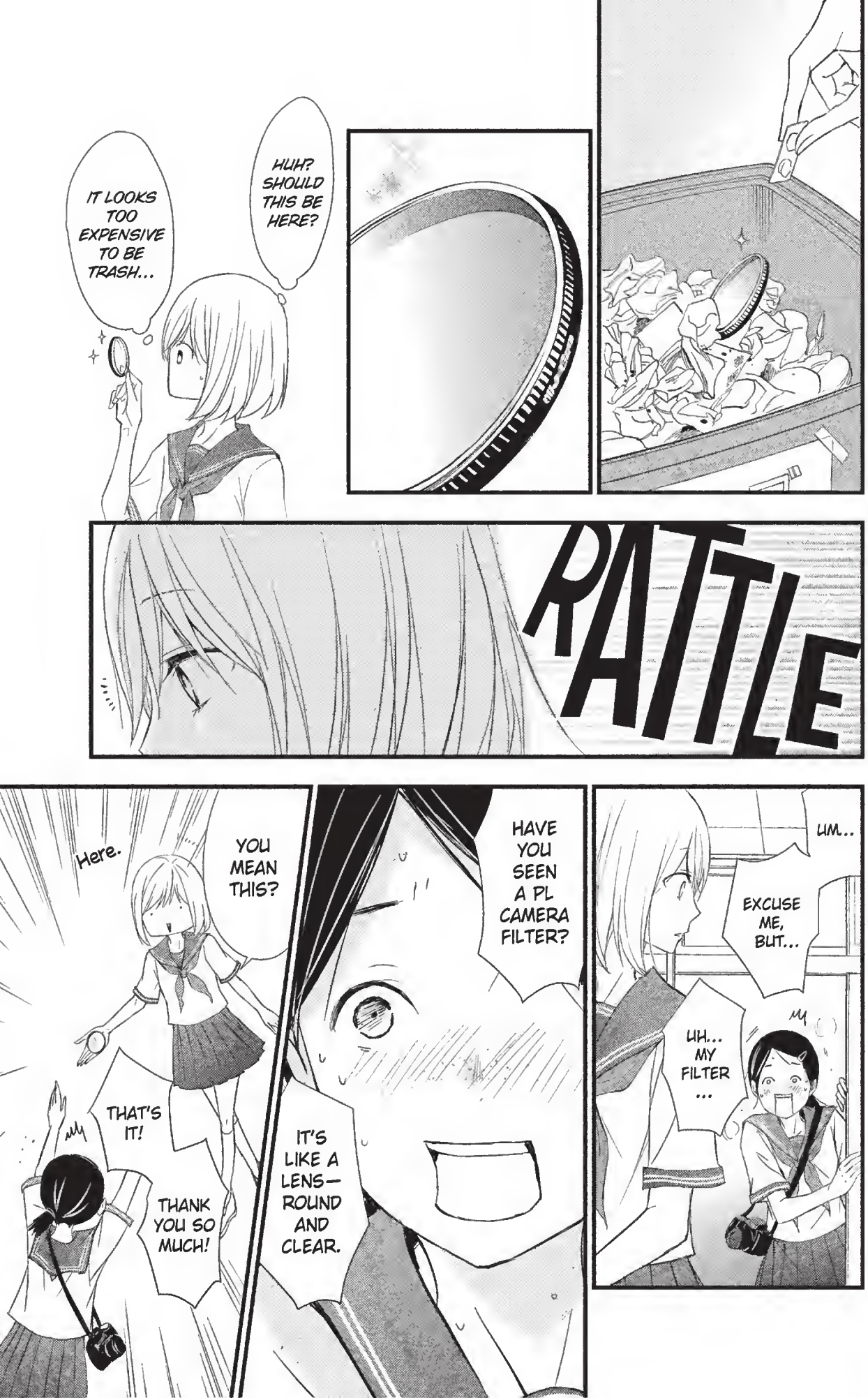

...CUZ THE PHOTO-GRAPHY CLUB BULLIED HER.
THEY MADE FUN OF HER PHOTOS... AND OF HER LOOKS TOO.
REALLY?
YEAH.
MS. HAYASHI IS THE ADVISOR FOR THAT CLUB, RIGHT? EVERYONE LOVES HER CUZ SHE'S NICE AND SO PRETTY.
I hear she modeled in college.
YEAH, SO MIKI KEPT TRYING TO TALK TO HER...

WHAT AN AWFUL STORY...
HMM? FUMI...?
THEY'RE LIKE, WHAT WERE YOU DOING?!
I HEAR MS. HAYASHI'S GETTING IT FROM THE OTHER TEACHERS.
SO MIKI SUBMITTED HER OWN PHOTO, AND SHE WON!
CRITIQUE

She played favorites.
SHE IGNORED MIKI'S PHOTOS AND NEVER RECOM-MENDED HER FOR ANY AWARDS.
...BUT MS. HAYASHI JUST SMILED AND DISMISSED HER.
So what if she was a model?
WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?

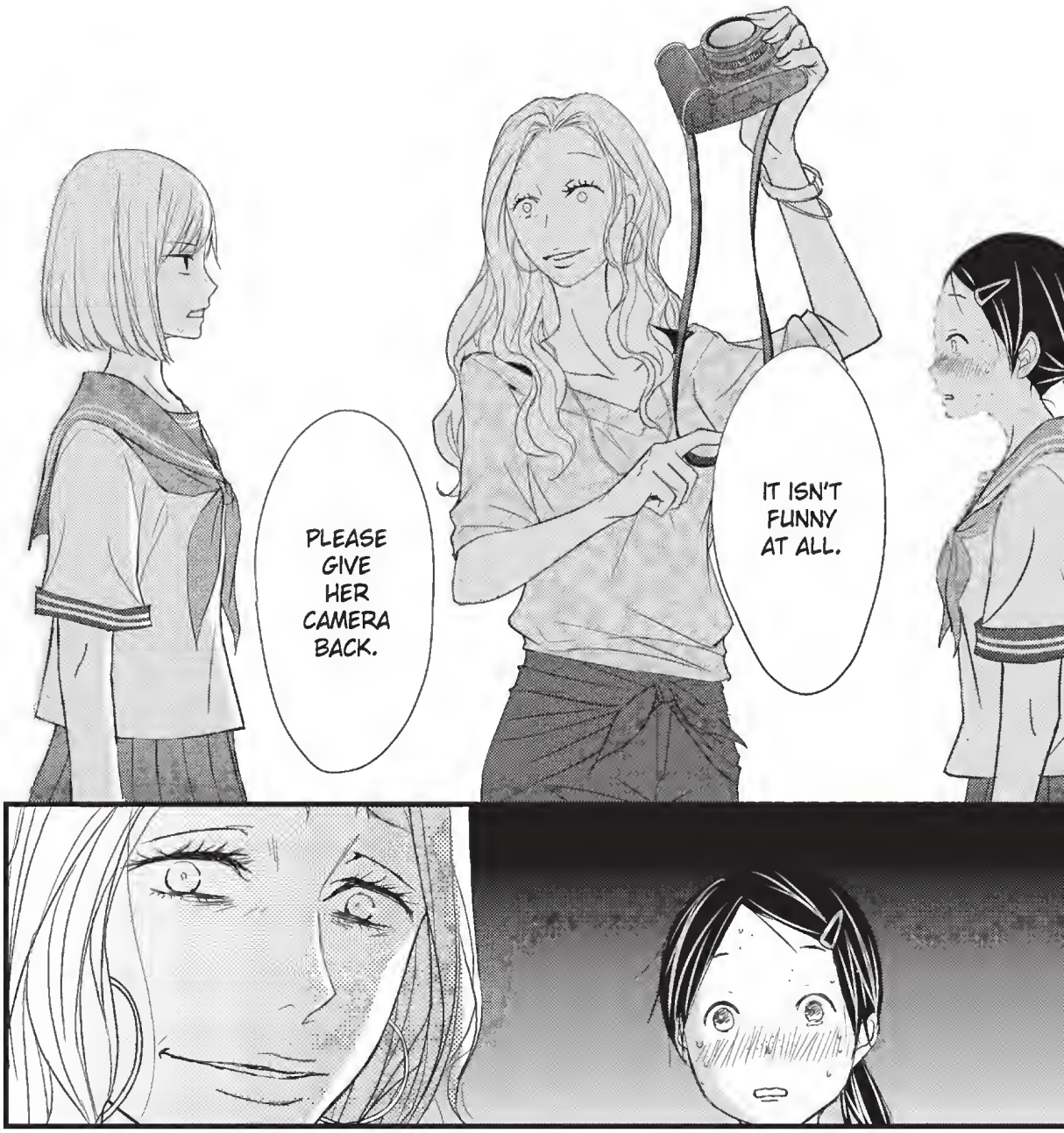
YOU LOOK A LITTLE PALE.
YOU DIDN'T FINISH YOUR LUNCH. ARE YOU FEELING SICK?
UH, NO...
IT'S JUST...
OH, THAT TIME OF THE MONTH?
Oh no...
IT'S THE SECOND DAY? I SYMPA-THIZE.
Poor you!
DO YOU GET BAD CRAMPS?
GO TO THE NURSE AND GET SOME PAIN-KILLERS.
IT'S NOT ALWAYS BAD, BUT...
...SOME MONTHS IT'S PRETTY PAINFUL.
OH!
Kyu-taro ...
WHAT'S UP? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
Did you have your lunch?
I'M GOING TO SEE THE NURSE—
WHAT?!
WHY? ARE YOU SICK?!
NO, IT'S NOT...
UH...
Or hurt? Show me.

I'M FINE! NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
HEY!
ZOOM
...?
I'LL EXPLAIN WHEN WE GET HOME!
NURSE'S OFFICE
WELL, I CAN'T EXPECT HIM TO.
HE'S JUST A GUY IN HIGH SCHOOL.
HMM...
KYUTARO COULDN'T TELL WHAT'S WRONG.
BUFFERIN

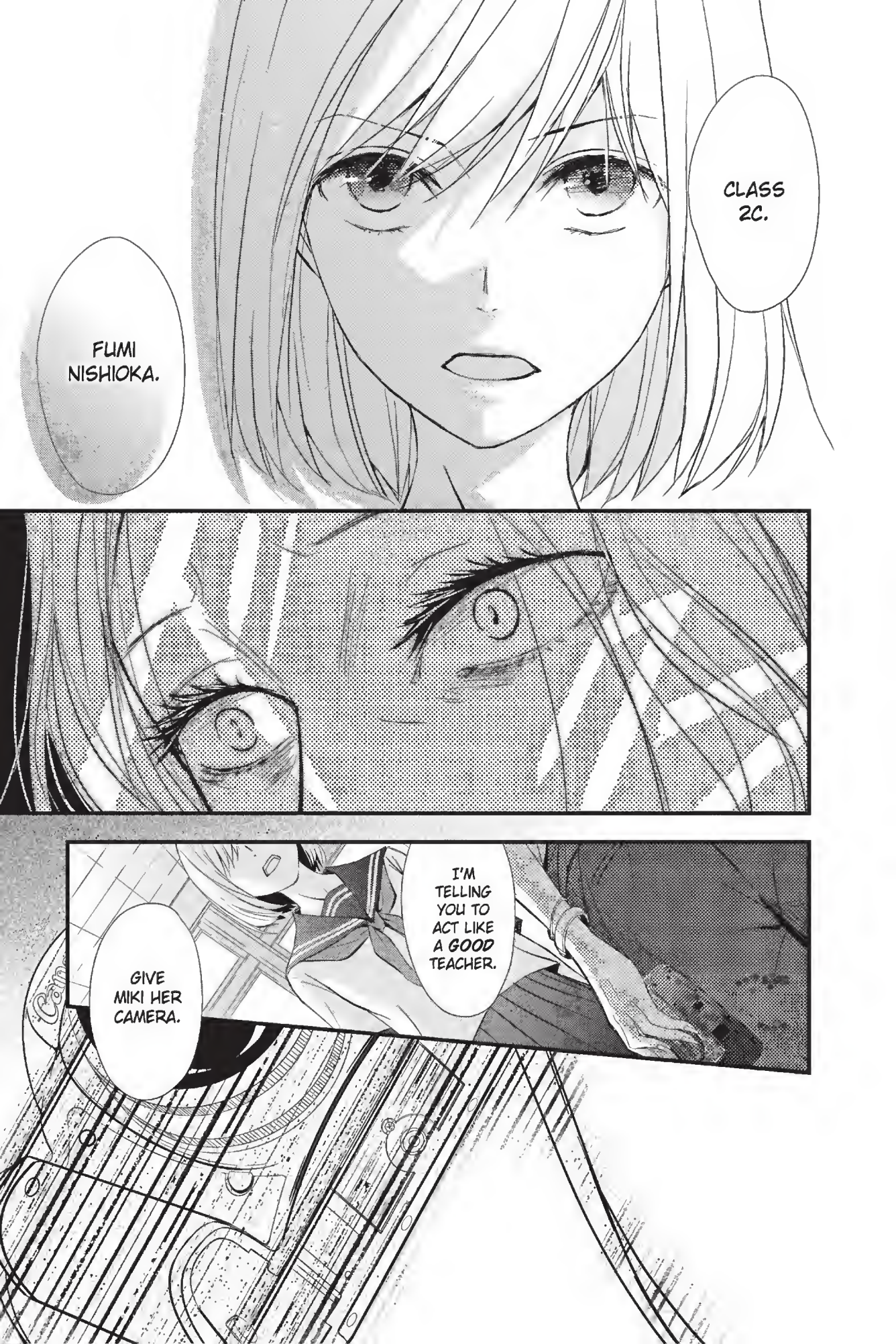

HUH? SHOULD THIS BE HERE?
IT LOOKS TOO EXPENSIVE TO BE TRASH...
RATTLE
UM...
EXCUSE ME, BUT...
UH... MY FILTER...
HAVE YOU SEEN A PL CAMERA FILTER?
IT'S LIKE A LENS— ROUND AND CLEAR.
YOU MEAN THIS?
Here.
THAT'S IT!
THANK YOU SO MUCH!

MIKI.K
Canonm
OH, IT'S FOR A CAMERA ?
WHAT A RELIEF!
TWIST TWIST
THANK YOU! WITHOUT IT, THE SKY...
HUH ?
HEY, ARE YOU MIKI KOKUBO ?
Y-YES, BUT HOW...
YOU WON THAT PHOTO-GRAPHY PRIZE, RIGHT?
I THOUGHT SO!
KOKUBO.
ONE OF MY CLASS-MATES WAS RAVING—

TMP
DID YOU FIND YOUR FILTER?
UH... YES, MS. HAYASHI.
THIS GIRL FOUND IT.
OH? HMM...
WELL, THAT'S NICE.
IT PROBABLY FELL OUT OF MY POCKET WHEN I TOOK MY PILLS.
I ONLY BORROWED IT AS A JOKE.
WHAP WHAP
YOU UNDERSTAND, RIGHT, MS. AWARD WINNER?
Y...
YES.
CAN YOU EVEN ...
...TAKE DECENT PICTURES WITHOUT IT?
OH!
SHOVE
HOW GOOD CAN YOU BE IF YOU NEED AN EXPENSIVE CAMERA?
GIVE IT BACK...
HA HA HA!
AWW, YOU'RE SNORTING AGAIN.
Look.
SHE GETS SO WORKED UP WHEN I TOUCH IT. HILARIOUS, HUH?
FLINCH
SEE HOW SHE'S SNORTING ?


PLEASE GIVE HER CAMERA BACK.
IT ISN'T FUNNY AT ALL.

I'M A TEACHER!
AN ORDER?
TELL ME YOUR CLASS AND NAME!
OFTEN.
ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU YOU'RE NOT GOOD AT READING A ROOM?
NOW GIVE IT BACK.


CLASS 2C.
FUMI NISHIOKA.
I'M TELLING YOU TO ACT LIKE A GOOD TEACHER.
GIVE MIKI HER CAMERA.

WHA
M
NNGH...
CA
ASH
N-NISHIOKA!
MS. HAYASHI, PLEASE DON'T!
WHY DID YOU...
"NISHI-OKA"?
I'VE HEARD THAT NAME.
YOU'RE THAT HOMELESS GIRL WITH NO FAMILY, RIGHT? BULLIED EVERY-WHERE YOU GO?
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ANYTHING SO PATHETIC?

YOU THINK YOU CAN TALK TO ME LIKE THAT?
SHE'S IN-FESTED?
STAY CALM. DON'T LET HER MALICE DRAG YOU IN.
BA
SH
THAT GOES FOR YOU TOO, YOU TRASH.
AGH!
YOU BARELY EVEN COUNT AS HUMAN!
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE ANYTHING I'VE SEEN BEFORE...
IT'S NOT HER FAULT. IT'S THE BUGS...
WHY'D YOU WIN THAT PRIZE? TO GET BACK AT ME?
STOMP
STOMP
WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO SUFFER FOR IT?
I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP YOU LEARN YOUR PLACE.
YOU'RE THE SCUM OF THE EARTH! DON'T EVEN LOOK AT ME!
BUT I'M A FAILURE? AS IF!
AND NOW MY BOY-FRIEND'S DUMPING ME...?

GRIND
GRIND
YOU'RE NAUSEATING!
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT! DO YOU EVEN UNDERSTAND THAT?
IS IT THE BUGS?
IT ALL STARTED WHEN I SAW YOUR UGLY FACE!
ALL THIS ...?
NO...
YOU DON'T DESERVE TO LIVE!
YOU WORTHLESS GARBAGE!
NOT THIS ONE.
WHAT DO YOU...
...NEED THIS CAMERA FOR?
DON'T GET COCKY, IDIOT.

LET GO.
RIGHT THIS INSTANT.

W-WHAT ...?
WHAT ARE YOU... DOING ...?
I THOUGHT I MADE MYSELF CLEAR.
GRRP
I TOLD YOU TO LET GO.
I'LL KILL YOU, FOOL.
NOW KNEEL.
ON YOUR KNEES!
OH...
THUD
NGH...
UGH...
SLAP
HANDS ON THE FLOOR. DON'T BUDGE.

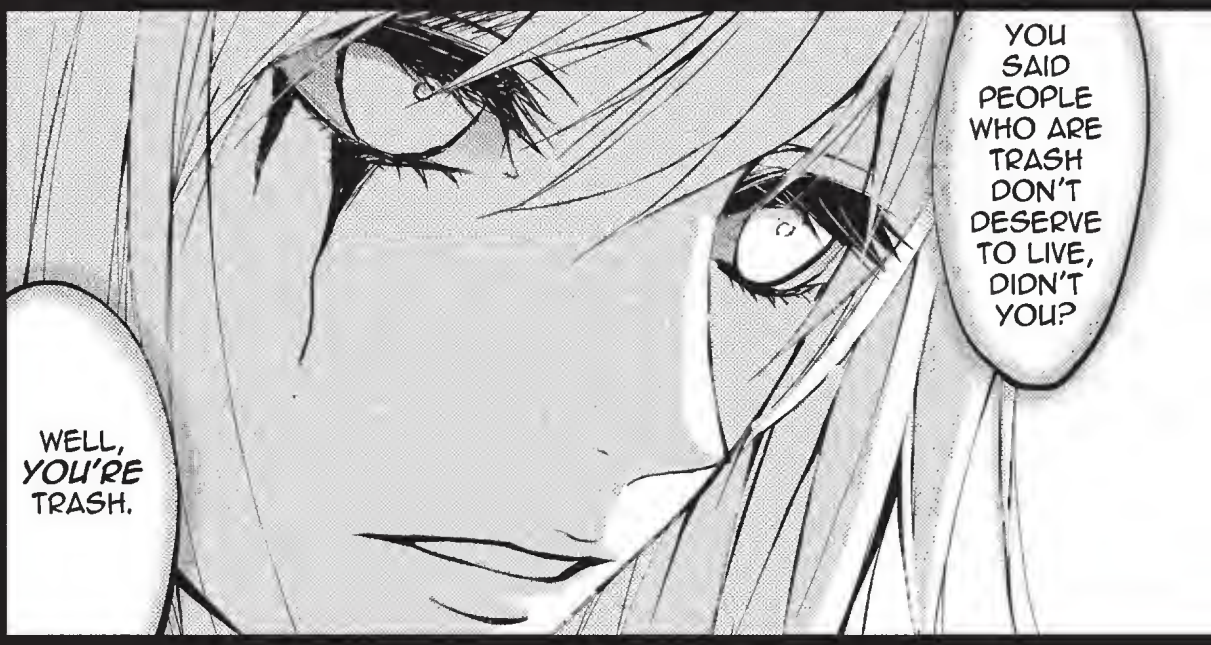
W...
WAIT...
WHAT IS THIS?
WHY CAN'T I MOVE?
ARE...
ARE YOU ANGRY?
I'M SORRY, I...
NOW, ABOUT YOUR EYES.

WHAT AM I DOING?

WHY?

I DON'T FEEL WELL. I'M QUEASY.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S HER FAULT.



WHAT'S THIS FEELING?

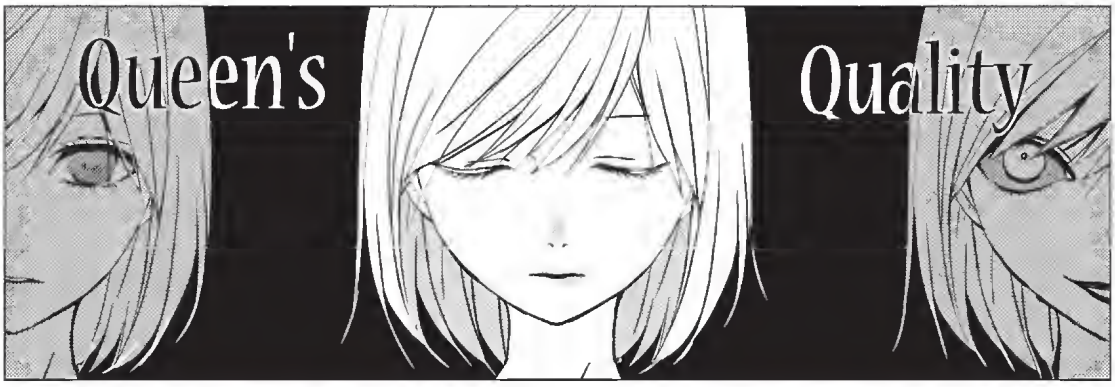
I'M NAUSEATED, AND YET...

...THE CORE OF MY BRAIN FEELS LIGHT.

...SOMEWHERE INSIDE ME...

...I HEARD THE SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING...

...TO A DARK PLACE I'D NEVER SEEN.



Things are getting pretty dicey! And due to the layout of this volume, the afterword wound up here.

The story's moving along at a good and heavy pace now. Fumi, Kyutaro and I will keep doing our best from here on out. I hope you'll read to the end of this volume, and I look forward to seeing you in volume 2!

Kyousuke Motomi

Kyousuke Motomi
c/o Queen's Quality Editor
Viz Media
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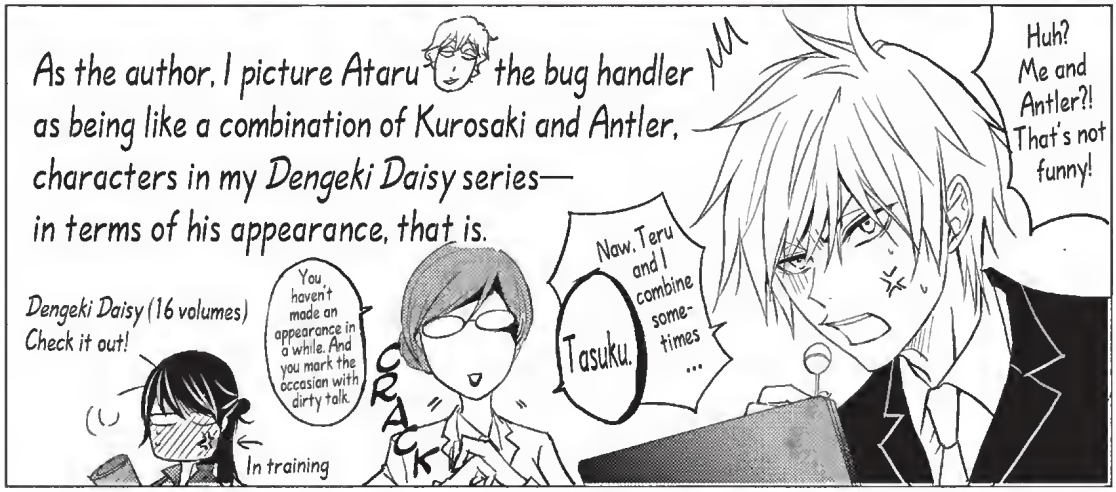
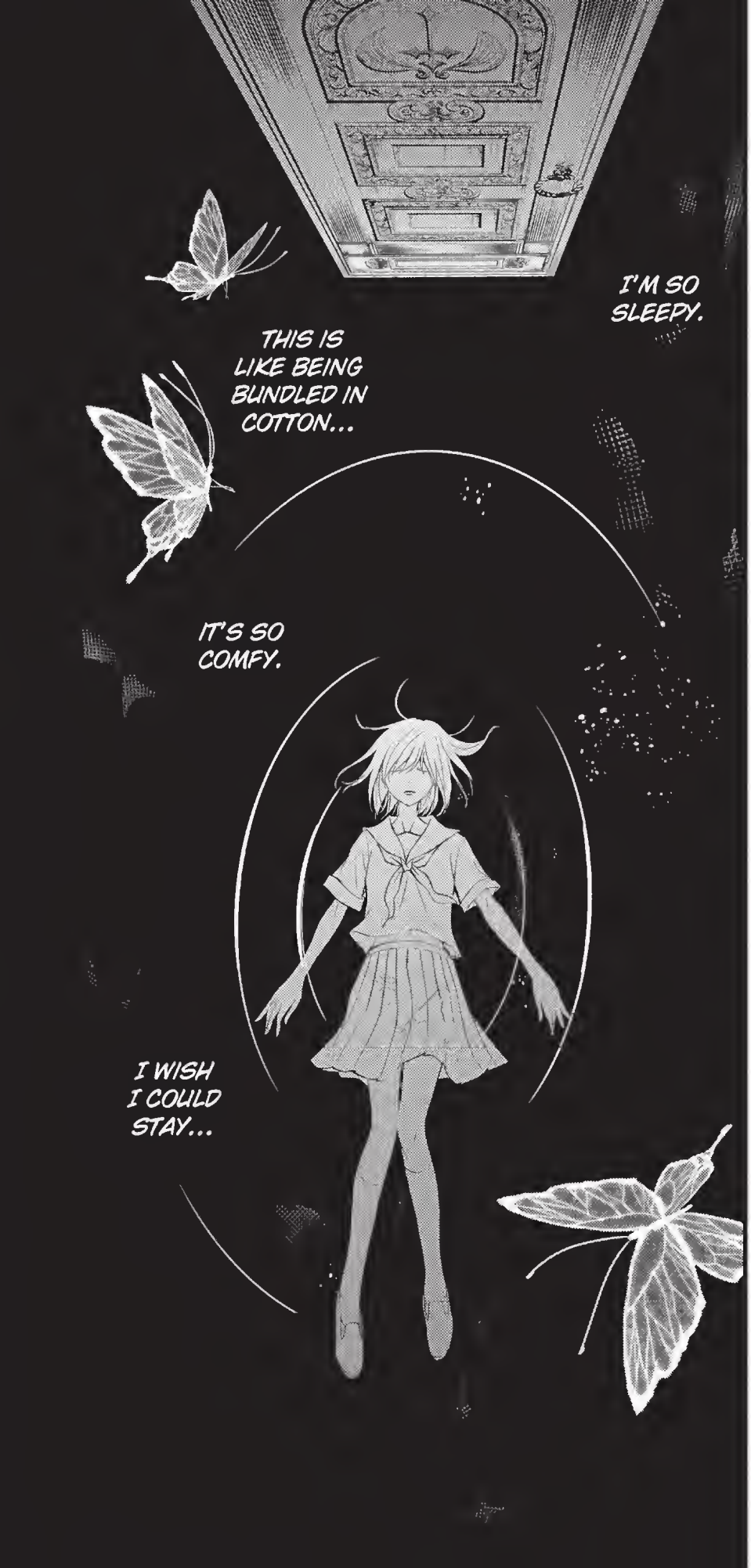
San Francisco, CA 94107

Chapter 5

As the author, I picture Ataru the bug handler as being like a combination of Kurosaki and Antler, characters in my *Dengeki Daisy* series— in terms of his appearance, that is.



THAT'S IT. SLEEP NOW.
ISN'T IT COMFORTABLE HERE? JUST STAY STILL.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE UGLINESS OUT THERE.
SHE'LL CLEAN IT UP.
SOMETHING UGLY AND AWFUL.
I WAS SEEING SOMETHING UGLY...
THAT'S RIGHT...



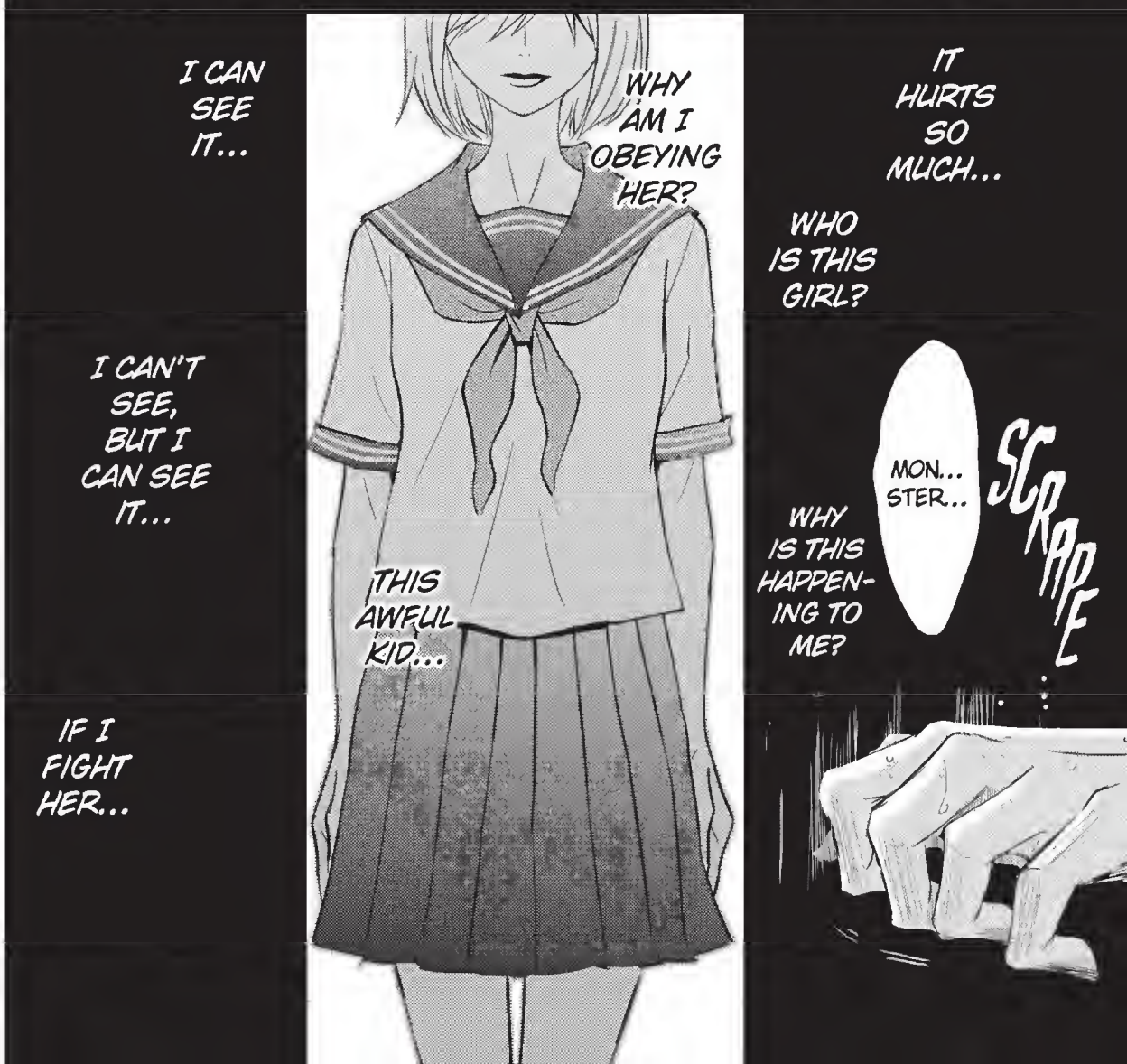
I NEVER WANT TO SEE OR TOUCH...

...ANYTHING LIKE THAT AGAIN.

EVERY-THING LIKE THAT SHOULD VANISH.

AAAAH!
MY...MY EYES ...!
THEY HURT ...
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING?!
STOP IT, YOU MON-STER ...!
SHUT UP.
..

MOUTH SHUT, EYES OPEN. UNDER-STAND?
AH...
NEVER CLOSE THEM AGAIN.
UNNGH ...!
KEEP THEM OPEN UNTIL YOU'RE BLIND.
IT HURTS ...


I CAN SEE IT...
WHY AM I OBEYING HER?
IT HURTS SO MUCH...
WHO IS THIS GIRL?
I CAN'T SEE, BUT I CAN SEE IT...
MON... STER..
SCRAPE
WHY IS THIS HAPPEN-ING TO ME?
THIS AWFUL KID...
IF I FIGHT HER...

SO TERRI-FYING...
I... I'M ABOUT TO DIE...
"MON-STER" ?
I'M SO SCARED...

IT'S NOT TRUE. I'M SORRY.
N-NO... I'M SORRY.
CRINGE
WHO IS A MONSTER? HMM?
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? IT'S HORRIBLE.
FOR-GIVE ME, PLEASE...
UNGH... FORGIVE ME.
IS IT ALL TOO MUCH FOR YOUR EMPTY BRAIN?
I'M SORRY...
FOR-GIVE ME...
ARE YOU SAYING THAT THE GIRL YOU TREATED LIKE DIRT, WHOM YOU ROBBED OF DIGNITY...
...HASN'T SUFFERED AS MUCH AS YOU?
OH, IS IT?
ARE YOU SAYING WHAT YOU DID WASN'T HORRIBLE?

HA HA HA HA!
AGHH!
I'M GOING BLIND.
SCRAPE
SCRAPE
I'M GOING TO DIE! IT HURTS!
OH, IT HURTS? REALLY?
THAT'S GOOD. I WANT YOU TO...
...KEEP SUFFER-ING!
I'M SORRY! FORGIVE ME!
SCRAPE

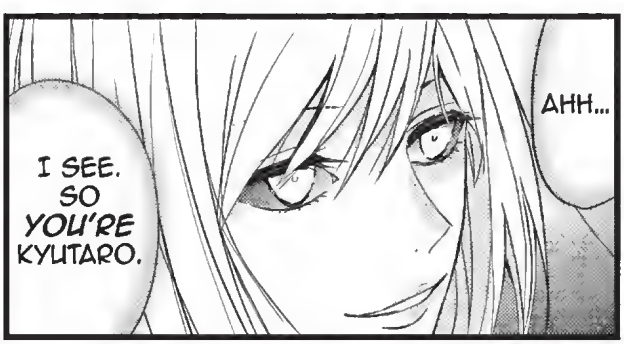
SUFFER FAR MORE THAN YOUR VICTIMS DID.
HURT MORE THAN THEY EVER DID.
THAT'S HOW KARMA WORKS.
YOU KEPT SPREADING YOUR FILTH AND MALICE EVERY-WHERE YOU WENT...
...WITHOUT REALIZING HOW HIDEOUS YOU WERE, MAGGOT.
I'LL GIVE YOU A...
...WONDER-FULLY APT PUNISH-MENT.
PICK UP THOSE SCIS-SORS.
PLEASE, NO...
CURCK
FOR-GIVE ME...
NOW ...

I'LL COUNT DOWN FROM THREE, AND THEN YOU'RE GOING TO...
...GOUGE OUT YOUR OWN EYES.
NO...
ONE...
HELP ME...!
WAIT, NISHIOKA!
TWO...
THREE.

WHO ARE YOU?
WHERE DID YOU CRAWL OUT FROM?
HMM?
SHE'S NOT LOOKING AT YOU ANYMORE.
YOU CAN CLOSE YOUR EYES.
SLEEP.

I'M KYUTARO...
...HORI-KITA.
A SWEEPER OF THE GENBU GATE...
...AND FUMI'S CONSORT.

AND YOU'RE HER— YES, I SEE.
HA HA!

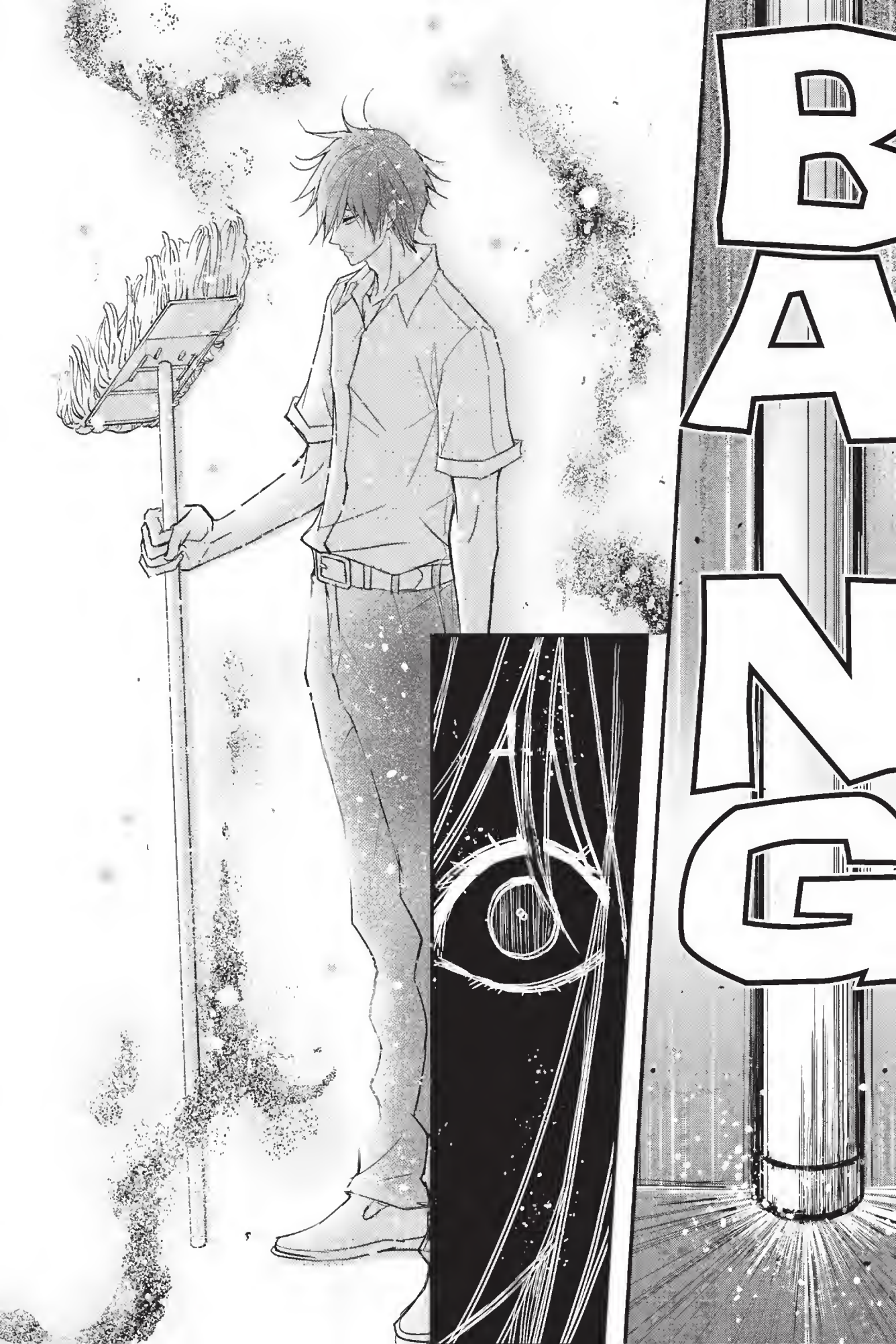

AHH...
I SEE. SO YOU'RE KYUTARO.

AND YOU'RE THE BLACK QUEEN?

WELL, YOU SEEM LESS CRUDE THAN THE OTHERS.
...APPARENTLY THAT'S WHAT I'M BEING CALLED.
Heh
IT'S NOT THE MOST ORIGINAL, BUT...
I'M BUSY TAKING OUT THE TRASH AROUND HERE.
YOU COULD SAY I'M CLEANING THIS WORLD.
STAND DOWN, KYUTARO.
FUMI.
IF YOU CLAIM TO BE A SWEEPER—

CAN YOU HEAR MY VOICE?
FUMI, COME BACK.
FUMI...
WHA...

SLAP
YOU—!
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE SPEAKING TO?
I ORDERED YOU TO STAND DOWN!
IF YOU WON'T...
GET ON YOUR KNEES!
...YOU CAN DIE!


BANG

W...
WHAT...
WHAT ARE YOU...
YOU...
FUMI.
CAN YOU HEAR ME? WAKE UP.
FUMI!
CLATTER
STOP IT! NO! NOT YET!
TMP
I'M HERE. I'M WAITING FOR YOU.
S...
STOP.
COME BACK.
YOU'RE THERE, AREN'T YOU...
...FUMI?

FUMI...
KYUTARO...?
COME BACK.
...CALLING ME.
I'M WAITING FOR YOU.
HE'S...

HOW DID I GET HERE?
WHAT AM I DOING?
I'VE GOT TO GO BACK.
I'VE GOT TO GO BACK.
...IS WAITING.
KYUTARO...

OH... OH NO...
NO, NO, DON'T COME BACK. NOT YET!
WHY? AFTER EVERY-THING...
CRASH
...I'M DIS-APPEARING AGAIN?
NO!
FUMI—
SHUT UP! JUST BE QUIET!
I AM NOT FUMI!
IT'S YOUR FAULT!
I... I...
YOU IGNORE ME AND KEEP CALLING TO HER?
WHY ...?

GO TO SLEEP.
I'LL REMEMBER YOU.

KYUTARO
...
KYUTARO
...
CLUTCH

OH...
KYUTARO ...?
NISHIOKA...
THERE YOU ARE.
Hey, you got hurt?
YOU'RE FINE. STAY CALM.
U-UM.. WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?
BUT... UNTIL A SECOND AGO...
FUMI'S BACK?

THAT'S GOOD.
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS ONE. DON'T WORRY.
I'VE CONTACTED SENDAI AND TAKAYA.
JUST KEEP CALM.
WAIT...
DOES THAT MEAN I TURNED INTO THE BLACK QUEEN...?
CALM DOWN, NISHIOKA.
I...
...MUST HAVE...
NISHI-OKA.
FUMI!

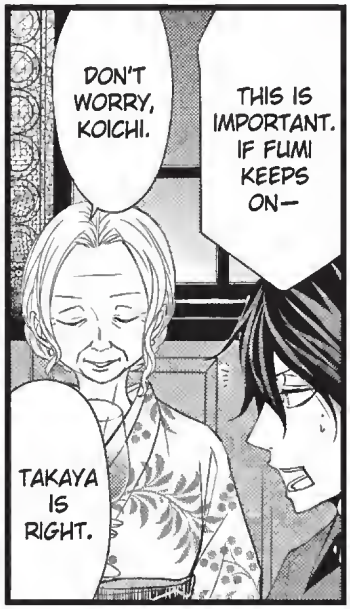
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
YOU CAME BACK.
YOU HEARD MY VOICE, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU CAME BACK ON YOUR OWN.
YOU DIDN'T LOSE TO THE BLACK QUEEN.
KYUTARO...
YOU'RE SAFE.

ATARU?
YOU'RE BACK?
KOFF
WHEEZ KOFF
IDIOT. WHY DID YOU GO TO THE INSIDE ALONE?
I'M SORRY, SIS.
WHEEZ
I MADE IT BACK THOUGH.
THE BUGS I IMPLANTED IN MY SLAVE WENT INTO A RAGE.
NOT SURPRISING FROM SUCH ABSOLUTE TRASH.

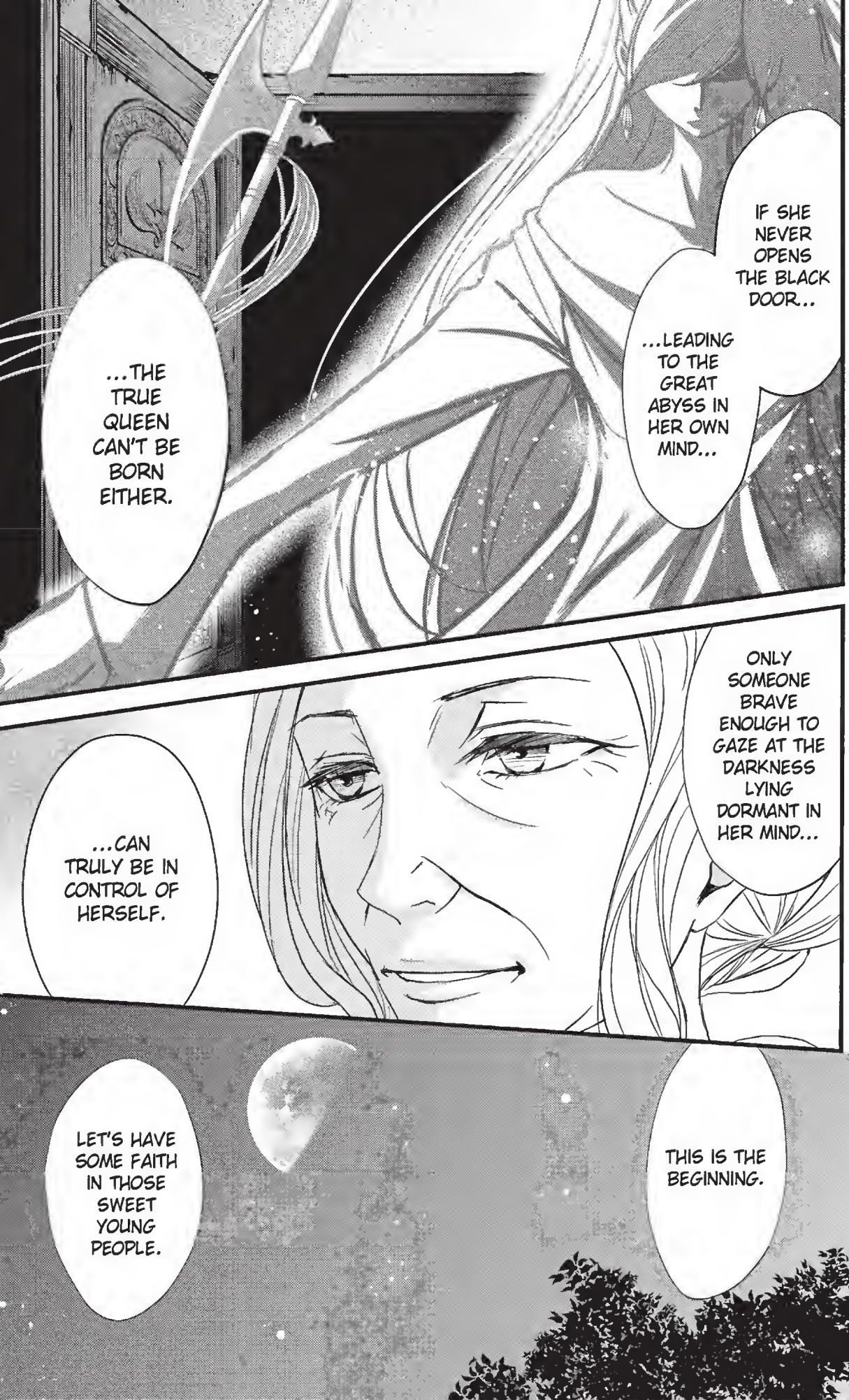
I MADE CONTACT WITH THAT GIRL.
IT WENT FASTER THAN I EXPECTED.
THE BLACK QUEEN FINALLY SHOWED UP.
TOO BAD SHE WAS BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL SO QUICKLY.
BUT THAT'S OKAY.
THE FIRST DOOR..
...TO THE BLACK QUEEN HAS OPENED.
THINGS ARE JUST GETTING STARTED.

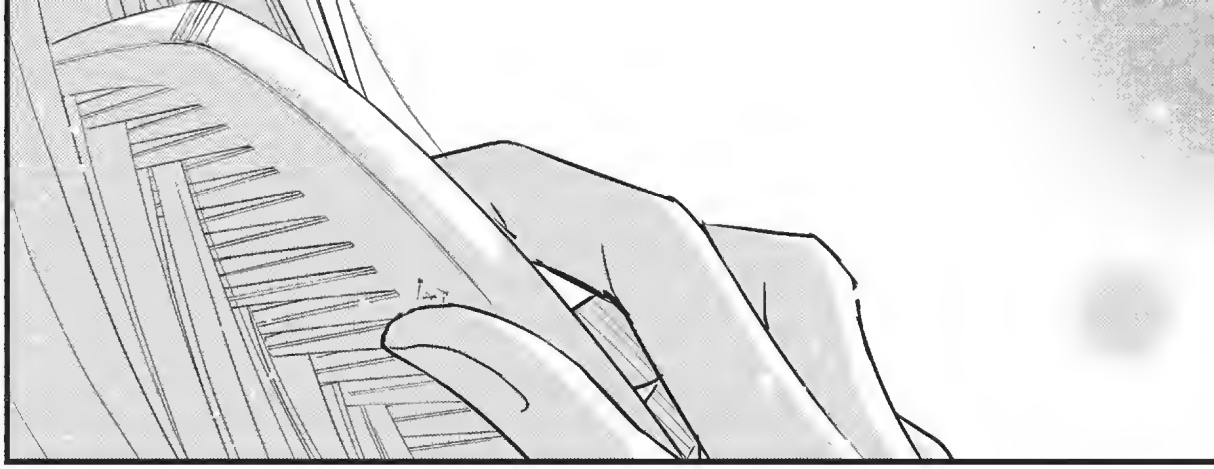
WELL... THAT WAS HER RITE OF PASSAGE.
NO POINT WORRYING ABOUT IT.

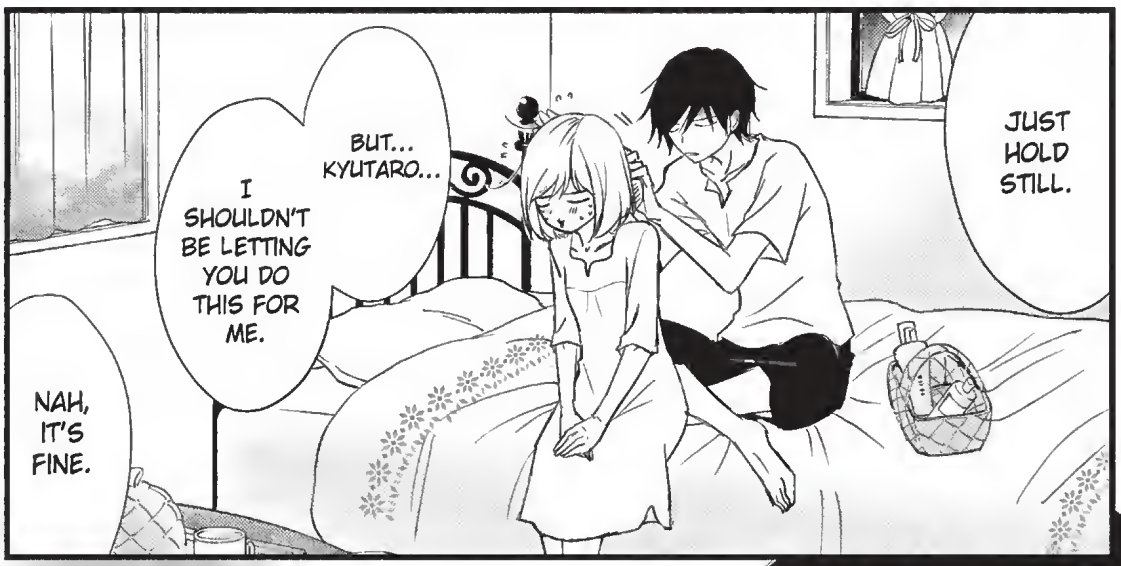
THIS WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN.
AFTER ALL...


DON'T WORRY, KOICHI.
THIS IS IMPORTANT. IF FUMI KEEPS ON—
TAKAYA IS RIGHT.

DON'T TALK SO IRRESPON-SIBLY.
Hey, you're drinking too fast.
I SAID IT'D BE COMING.
Give me more wine, will you?
I TOLD FUMI.


IF SHE NEVER OPENS THE BLACK DOOR...
...LEADING TO THE GREAT ABYSS IN HER OWN MIND...
...THE TRUE QUEEN CAN'T BE BORN EITHER.
ONLY SOMEONE BRAVE ENOUGH TO GAZE AT THE DARKNESS LYING DORMANT IN HER MIND...
...CAN TRULY BE IN CONTROL OF HERSELF.
THIS IS THE BEGINNING.
LET'S HAVE SOME FAITH IN THOSE SWEET YOUNG PEOPLE.




JUST HOLD STILL.
BUT... KYUTARO...
I SHOULDN'T BE LETTING YOU DO THIS FOR ME.
NAH, IT'S FINE.

A COMB IS A TALISMAN AGAINST EVIL.
THEY SAY THE ACT OF COMBING SYMBOLIZES SHREDDING YOUR SUFFERING.
BE-SIDES ...
WHEN SOME-ONE'S CAUGHT UP IN...
...SELF-LOATHING, THIS KIND OF CARE CAN HELP DEAL WITH IT.
IT CAN BANISH INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS OF...
...BEING A FAILURE.

If you let this get you down, you'll be doing what that bug handler wants.
I never want that to happen!
YOU'RE RIGHT.
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE DEPRESSED.
WE'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE BLACK QUEEN.
TAKAYA SAID IT WAS A RITE OF PASSAGE, DIDN'T HE?

UM...
WHAT IS IT?
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO ASK YOU.
UH... KYUTARO ...?

AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF ME?
AREN'T YOU...
...DIS-GUSTED ?

I'M NOT AFRAID.
YOU'RE AN ORDINARY GIRL.
EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING UNPLEASANT ABOUT THEM.
YOU MAY HAVE THE QUEEN'S POWER...
...BUT OTHERWISE, YOU'RE NORMAL.
EVERYONE HAS DARK THOUGHTS...
...OR PARTS OF THEMSELVES THAT THEY CAN'T CONTROL.
MAYBE THEY HAVE UN-CONTROLLABLE FEELINGS THAT THEY CAN'T REVEAL TO ANYONE ELSE...
...AND THEY'RE ABOUT TO BREAK LOOSE...

THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF.
EVERY-ONE HAS THEM.
I DO TOO.
IF YOU'RE GOING, THEN I'LL GO WITH YOU.
EVEN IF YOU'RE HEADING SOMEPLACE EVEN DARKER AND DEEPER...
LET'S GO FORWARD.
Queen's Quality ① The End

For some reason I often get told that I look like I do yoga. I'd like to take lessons. I wonder if there are any yoga poses that would make me draw manga faster.

—Kyousuke Motomi

Author Bio

Born on August 1, Kyousuke Motomi debuted in *Deluxe Betsucomi* with *Hetakuso Kyupiddo* (No Good Cupid) in 2002. She is the creator of *Dengeki Daisy*, *Beast Master* and *QQ Sweeper*, all available in North America from VIZ Media. Motomi enjoys sleeping, tea ceremonies and reading Haruki Murakami.

Queen's Quality

Vol. 1

Shojo Beat Edition

STORY AND ART BY
KYOUSUKE MOTOMI

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